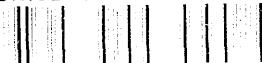


The Use of the Bible
with Children

ETHEL L. SMITHER

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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THE STORY OF THE BIBLE FOR CHILDREN

BY WILLIAM L. GUTHRIE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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**THE USE OF THE BIBLE WITH CHILDREN
TEACHING PRIMARIES IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL**

The Use of the Bible with Children

ETHEL L. SMITHER

A Textbook in the Standard Course in Leadership
Training, Approved by the Curriculum Com-
mittee of the Board of Education of the
Methodist Episcopal Church



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN

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TO

SARAH E. GREEN

Friend and co-sharer in a happy and challenging
task, the service of childhood.

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FOREWORD

THIS discussion of the subject, **THE USE OF THE BIBLE WITH CHILDREN**, has grown out of expressed need, that of hundreds of pastors, departmental superintendents, teachers and parents. Wherever an opportunity to meet in a group to discuss the subject of this book has been offered in the past several years, adults have evidenced a keen desire for guidance in facing the problems connected with a restudy of the use of the Bible with children. The topics included herein were chosen when the book finally came into being by the standards, "What questions have parents and teachers asked?" "What do they wish most to know?" "What seem to be their greatest needs?"

The suggestions for procedure with children have grown out of practical teaching experience. They reflect the writer's opportunities to be with children and help them to learn in this realm, and also the interesting reports of many other classroom teachers and of parents. The book has literally grown out of life.

There are no more pressing problems for the adult in the church of today than recapturing his own zest for Bible study, learning how to make the Bible effective in the lives of his children and awakening their zest for continuous Bible study. The writer hopes that this book will prove a beginning in the study of a problem close to the hearts of Christian people and of such tremendous importance in the program of religious nurture. If this book stimulates experimentation and other contributions along this line, it will have served one of its purposes. If it helps teachers to rethink purpose and method for Bible teaching, it will have accomplished its other major objective. The writer has attempted to utilize in the field of Bible teaching the best that is known at present in child psychology and teaching procedure.

FOREWORD

The theme of this book may well be stated in the words quoted from the book of Proverbs:

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom;
Yea, with all thy getting get understanding.—Proverbs
4. 7.

It is to help both teacher and children truly to understand that the book has been prepared.

The manuscript was used as a basal outline a number of times by the writer while the manuscript was in the process of preparation. The writer wishes to express appreciation to Sarah E. Green and Ada W. Smith, who also used it as a basal book in courses in summer schools. She must also acknowledge indebtedness to Dr. Lucius H. Bugbee and Dr. N. F. Forsyth for their careful reading and thoughtful reactions to the manuscript. Her gratitude is freely expressed to Mary Edna Lloyd, Lola Hazelwood, and Edith Jones, of the Staff of the Department of Children's Publications, Methodist Episcopal Church, and to Lucy King De Moss for their helpfulness in bringing the manuscript to completion.

CHAPTER I

THE TEACHER'S PURPOSE

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

Underline your first choice of the following reasons for teaching the Bible to children. They were chosen from statements made by groups of parents and teachers.

1. Because it is the word of God.
2. Because it is great literature.
3. Because it will teach a child how to obey.
4. Because it is a symbol.
5. Because it is a source book of knowledge of what is worthy living.
6. Because it is the most important biography.
7. Because it is a guide for daily living, a comfort in adversity.
8. Because it is a guide to a Christian philosophy of life.
9. Because it leads men to God and reveals God to men.
10. Because it helps Christian character to grow.

Indicate your second and third choices with a check and a double check.

Reason for Rethinking Purpose and Method of Teaching the Bible

An interviewer once asked Richard Evelyn Byrd, the great aviator, of what he thought as he flew over the North Pole. "Do you really want to know?" he answered. . . . "I caught for the first time, as in a flash of understanding, the inadequate results of the efforts to solve . . . the problems of mankind. . . . Beneath me lay a vast, silent, unoccupied field of snow and ice, varying in tone and without life. My knowledge . . . plus my imagination, carried me into . . . the peopled places, the seats of empire, the scenes of turmoil and conquest, and the survival of the fittest. . . . We have improved and progressed and developed, but we have failed to make the most of *ourselves*. . . . The really

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great explorers will be those who find the way to universal reconstruction, the first step in which is the abolition of war and the needless destruction of human life."¹

Many church people are conscious of the situation today that calls for the reconstruction that Admiral Byrd sensed as necessary. The thoughtful teacher of children believes that present-day religious problems call for his best and most serious study. "Why do I wish to teach the Bible? How will the Bible help children? How does it help me from day to day?" he asks himself. He is conscious that much of the program for religious teaching rests on careful, thoughtful answers to these questions. The teacher is content with no hastily arrived at, conventional, or dogmatic answers, for he knows that the spread of new knowledge has come very rapidly. Especially is this so true in every field of thought that influences the teaching of children through the use of the Bible that the teacher who does effective work studies and rethinks purpose and method in Bible teaching for himself.

When teachers state their purposes for Bible teaching, their responses indicate that there is no one commonly accepted point of view. Some parents and teachers have rethought the use of the Bible with children by assimilating the best of knowledge about the Bible, techniques in teaching, and discoveries about child life. Others use methods and approaches that have been in use for some generations but have not brought these methods under the scrutiny of their own background of knowledge in related fields, especially those of psychology and method. Too few teachers make a study of the objectives for the use of the Biblical material in the course that they are using. This is one reason why the course sometimes proves to be unsatisfactory.

¹ *Literary Digest*, July 23, 1927, p. 36: "Dick Byrd as a Mercury of Modern Flying Science," quoted from Mr. Robert H. Davis in his *New York Sun* column on his recent meeting with this "Tourist of the Atmosphere."

THE TEACHER'S PURPOSE

Public-school teachers sometimes show little transfer of their training to the field of religious teaching. When public-school teachers do think in terms of religious nurture also, they have much to contribute to the subject, the use of the Bible in teaching children.

Common Elements in All Successful Teaching

There has been good teaching both in the past and in the present. Many of the techniques to be discussed later seek to emphasize the characteristics of all successful teaching. Unless the broadest definition of procedure is implied, other elements besides method enter into this religious guidance.

The Christian fellowship of the church and of the home, the example set by parents and teachers, the influence of their personalities, the vitality of the Book itself are powerful factors that will always enter into the teaching of the Bible and cause its use, regardless or in spite of method, to nurture religious growth. Many pupils in the past have been helped to continue Bible study and to become religious individuals by contact with mature religious persons who were keen Bible students. Present conditions among adults are not as likely to produce this result.

Planning to Teach Effectively

Our age, like every other period, will use the best that it knows in child psychology, method, and Bible research to achieve the most wholesome results. To do effective work it will fit its approach and technique to the spirit and need of its own time. There have been recently great social changes, scientific discoveries, and increased skill in the field of teaching, all of which the present generation of religious teachers can have at their command. Methods that were fairly well suited to the simpler social life and church fellowship of the past are inadequate today. For example, the unquestioned authoritative position of parents or teacher, whether for good or ill, does not exist at present.

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Children and youth wish to discover for themselves, to think for themselves, and to come to their own conclusions. A junior boy recently said to the department head, "I am leaving this Sunday school." "But why?" she said. "I am tired of listening to my teacher do all the talking. I want her to help me find things out for myself," was his reply. Many teachers are taking this change into consideration and adapting plans to meet it. One keen-minded junior leader reports: "Changing standards of life raise so many points that are almost impossible to explain. Pupils wish to read the Bible for themselves and to study for themselves. We aren't equipped to meet their unexpected questions and discussions."

Discovering Current Purposes

To judge by the reactions of many parents and teachers, the reasons for teaching the Bible may be roughly classified under the headings, imparting knowledge, doing the conventional thing in Sunday school, teaching Bible worship, withholding specific Biblical material, guiding growing life. Sometimes purpose is so intertwined and conditioned by a certain conception of learning and teaching that it is hard to separate it from idea of procedure. Let us consider briefly each of these purposes in turn.

To Impart Knowledge

One approach to the teaching of the Bible is imparting knowledge about it. This is based on a definition of teaching as presenting facts and drilling children on them until a verbal mastery is to be assumed. The teacher dominates the process, the child being the passive recipient. Religion is transmitted from one generation to the next by telling. The revelation of God is historical rather than living and vital.

Parents and church-school workers who so interpret teaching the Bible usually are familiar with methods once commonly accepted but no longer accredited because the

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psychological theories on which they are based have been proved inaccurate or inadequate. Teaching is visualized as following this plan: Present a truth, sometimes sermonize and moralize upon this truth, which is called applying it, have the child give back the truth through questions and in a review. Ability to repeat is considered identical with knowing. The hope is usually expressed that the Bible will be of value ultimately to the pupil. This idea of teaching places too little value on the present religious life of the child. There is a great gap unbridged by sympathetic insight between adult and child, and a failure to appreciate and to respect the peculiar values of the period of childhood to all the life. "Children do not think," a teacher of philosophy in one of our universities said recently. "You have to wait for adolescence for that." This professor spoke out of wide experience and knowledge of young people, but probably from the opposite where children were concerned. Children, especially from eight years of age on, begin to think abstractly and their searching questions would surprise most adults. Children under eight think and reason well also, but they need more stimulation from sensory and social experiences. This is to be expected because of the child's inexperience of life. But every age has its own powers of logical thought on its own plane.

Children are active and in carrying out their activities receive suggestions, test them, choose among them, try them out and revise in the light of experience, essential qualities of logical thought. Perhaps the cramming of children with unassimilated facts is one reason for the blunting of curiosity, especially when it begins to reach the intellectual plane in late childhood.² The quality of reconstruction of thought in adolescence is dependent on good teaching and guidance during childhood.

Many teachers who regard their work as imparting knowledge are dissatisfied. They report "lack of interest,"

² See Dewey, *How We Think* (rewritten), p. 39.

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"holding attention hard," "keeping mind on lesson and not outside interests impossible." "The boys are interested enough, but I am not satisfied. The Bible does not seem real and alive to the children. It seems to be 'for Sunday only.' "

Many persons who place emphasis on this point of view have deep abiding love and reverence for the Bible. Some have a genuine knowledge of its teachings. Whenever they understand that their handicap is one of method and of understanding child life and its development, the religious influence of their teaching and of their personalities increases.

Conventional Approach

The Bible has always been taught in church schools to children, so it is the accepted thing to do. There is surprise that the question is even asked, "What is your reason for using the Bible with children?" Answers range from the fact that the Bible is "good literature," "fine history," "has beautiful stories," "is the best book ever written," to "but isn't that the thing to do?" Imitation is the dominant motive for Bible teaching. Teachers taking this approach usually need to study the Bible seriously. There is a belief that the Bible does influence life, but no knowledge of how method can make influence effective.

Bible Worship

The Bible might almost be called an idol. It is read and reread, usually for hidden and allegorical meanings. It is looked upon as holding almost a magical message; that is, every passage stands for something else. Biblical material is twisted out of its real context. Instead of reverently studying to discover meaning, these persons choose texts to prove points of view and beliefs, or to indicate personal supernatural guidance, such as opening the Bible at random to certain passages when facing a puzzling prob-

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lem. Whether the Bible is understood or not, any part of it "will be equally good for them," meaning the children.

Most of the persons who hold this point of view follow older educational theories and are handicapped not only in their understanding of the Bible but also by their lack of skill as teachers.

Emphasis in First Three Groups of Purposes

The older methods of teaching place great importance upon learning facts. Children should acquire facts about the Bible because this is the definition of knowing. Leaders need to think in terms of associating the Bible with life, of knowing in the truest, broadest sense. The materials to be learned are often limited to the narrative stories of the Old Testament chosen from the Hexateuch (first six books of the Bible) and from the books of Samuel and Kings. The Gospels are to be taught, but they usually do not receive so careful an emphasis. Devotional and prophetic materials are ignored, except for Psalms 23, an habitually used passage. Naturally, when emphasis is placed upon facts, quantity is stressed rather than care in selection and thoroughness of teaching. There is an assumption that new material may and should be used every Sunday.

Teachers have sometimes asked: "Why don't we start with Genesis and go right through the Bible? The child is in the primitive age, and these early Bible stories reflect the childhood of the race." These teachers are unconsciously following an educational theory that has been discredited. It lingers on because of its former tremendous popularity.

The first six books of the Bible do not reflect so primitive a point of view as is sometimes supposed. The priestly teachers who put the Hexateuch into its final form were anything but primitive. The religious and emotional life even of primitive man never exactly parallels child life, for the man has had experiences that the child does not

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yet know. Child and primitive man may be more alike intellectually than emotionally. From the point of view of behavior patterns, the child today is hindered if he imitates patterns and acquires ideas acceptable in a primitive society but useless in modern life. He might as well begin by striving after more spiritual standards and more accurate knowledge.

Sometimes teachers and parents are dominated, though unconsciously, by a wistful longing to have the children know the Bible as they themselves have never mastered it. When their own hidden desire can be interpreted and they are shown methods of studying the Bible and of using it with children in effective ways, their lives are enriched and their teaching skill increased.

Withhold Specific Instruction

There is another group of adults whose approach to teaching the Bible is diametrically opposed to those held by the teachers just described. These adults have reacted from the authoritative and dogmatic interpretation of the Bible of their own childhood. They have gone to the other extreme. As one father, a prominent doctor, reported, "None of what I heard as a child shall my child have to listen to." This group is composed of earnest religious persons, often dominated by the sincerest desire to guide children aright. It includes not only teachers, but a growing group of thoughtful and well-educated parents. One reason why they and their children sometimes remain outside the church is to protect the children from the teaching they formerly received. These adults have not always clarified their thinking of how the teaching of science and the message of the Bible may be balanced. They are often without method of attack in this field. They do not believe in the use of any specifically religious material with children until they come to later childhood.

Human life today and its religious needs, wonderings, and struggles receive the major emphasis. The Bible is

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reflected indirectly in the atmosphere and in the activities that adults seek to develop at home, in the community, and at church. When Biblical material is introduced, it is often placed on a comparative basis, that is, along with other religious literature, heritages of other religions.

Using the Bible to Guide Growing Life

Another group of adults takes still another point of view to the use of the Bible with children; to stimulate and guide the growing religious life of the child. These parents and teachers wish children to have vital experiences and to associate them with the Bible. They hope so to use the Bible that children will be led gradually into experiences of fellowship with God. Teaching is guidance, not telling, imparting or drilling. The child's religious nurture is best accomplished when he grows religiously now in such ways that progress for the future follows naturally.

When persons who state this purpose ask themselves "How can the Bible help persons to be religious?" their answers include the following points: The Bible gives certain great principles that shed light on the pressing problems of life. It speaks to men by showing other individuals and groups facing great decisions. Ready-made answers to specific problems are not to be found in its pages. Men will face courageously and thoughtfully the complexities of modern life just as the men whose experiences are recorded in the Bible tried to meet the stresses and challenges of life in their eras. The Bible is universal in sweep, however, and so its teachings can help men in every age to withstand the pressures of life.

The Bible is also a religious book because it voices the devotional upwelling of hearts that have been touched by the Spirit of God. It contains a great record of man's worship experience, both as an individual and in groups.

It holds the record of the life and teachings of Jesus as seen through his impact on his first-century followers.

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It sets forth man's unceasing quest for God and God's revelation of himself to man through the centuries. The sweep of the centuries is challenging in itself.

Finally, the Bible's greatest meaning grows out of the fact that it came into being as a result of the searchings, distresses, failures, sins, achievements, commonplace living, and joys of life. It guides and shapes man's philosophy of life today just as it has through the ages. Men have always searched thus for the meaning of life. For example, in 627 A. D. Paulinus, a Christian missionary to England, came to the court of King Edwin of Northumbria. The king held a conference of his chief counselors. One arose and said, "The present life of man, O King, seems to me in comparison of that time which is unknown to us like the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter . . . the sparrow . . . flying in at one door and immediately out at another . . . vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If this new doctrine contain something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed."³

Reasons for Teaching the Bible

To summarize, the Bible is the best guide and inspiration in the age-long quest for God and for the meaning and justification of life. It stimulates thought and indicates principles to be used in the solution of puzzling problems, both personal and social. It shows the joys of righteousness and the sadness and despair of sin. Man finds here a plan of salvation. It holds the priceless record of Jesus' life and teaching and has helped every age the better to voice in beautiful and matchless language the devotional outpourings of the human heart.

³ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*.

THE TEACHER'S PURPOSE

Choosing a Purpose

The teacher who studies each of these statements of purpose senses that the last one—to guide life—includes the best of all the others. Knowledge is to be mastered by the pupil rather than imparted by the teacher. It is to be achieved in such ways that zest for continued study will be assured. Emphasis is placed primarily on knowledge functioning effectively in life, that is, on the Bible's influence on character growth and personality development. The study of the Bible is included in religious teaching, not because it is the usual thing to do, but because it has value for life. Reverence for the Bible results, provided the parent and teacher have a genuinely intelligent and devoted attitude toward it. Child religious need is central, but specific Bible teachings are considered of value to children. The Bible is regarded as having a unique place in religion, and not introduced merely on the basis of a study of comparative religions. The purpose-guiding life also seems best to assimilate what we now understand of child life and helpful methods of nurturing it.

Central Purpose of All Religious Teaching

These statements of purpose are for the most part not contradictory, because they include one common, fundamental essential. They all aim, some more definitely than others, to make the Bible effective in life.

When Dr. E. Stanley Jones went to visit Dr. Adolf Harnack, the great and revered German Bible student, he asked this question, "What is the final authority of the Bible?" The aged scholar, placing his hand upon his heart, answered, "When the historical Jesus meets the living Christ, then steel strikes flint and the stars fly upward." This is the ultimate purpose of all good teachers in the church. The following chapters of this book seek to equip teachers the better to accomplish this deeper aim through the teaching of the Bible. It purposes to aid them in meet-

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ing the need so many parents and teachers have expressed, that of rethinking and evaluating methods, gaining an insight to child life and its needs, and achieving a mastery of Bible knowledge themselves.

Questions

1. What Biblical material did you use last Sunday with your group? For what purpose?
2. List the purposes for the use of the Bible with children stated for the course of study which you are now teaching.

For Further Study

The Living Bible, Bower, William C., Chapters I-IV. Harpers.

The Story of the Bible, Bowie, W. Russell—Introduction. The Abingdon Press.

New Trails for the Christian Teacher, Smith, Robert S. Study I, II, III. The Westminster Press.

How We Think, Dewey, John. D. C. Heath and Co.

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE TEACHER

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

Make a list of all the Biblical material used for the last six weeks in the course of study that you are teaching. State the purpose for the inclusion of each Bible reference. Did you use it in keeping with the purpose set forth in the course of study? What was the reaction of the children?

How suitable did you find the material for carrying out the stated purposes?

Connect the Bible with Life

In order to teach the Bible from the point of view of function, of living the Bible as the children go along, the teachers set up a fellowship within the church in which all share to the best of their abilities. They plan for friendliness and mutual helpfulness, for active participation in significant work in the kingdom of God, in facing injustices and inequalities in a changing world, and in working for purity and self-control not only in personal life but in community life. Such a fellowship also allows for participation in the world-wide union of the followers of Jesus. Activity is lifted to the highest plane through worship. Biblical material is used to stimulate, to guide, and to lend devotional meanings to experience in a society of love. Only so much is used with any age group as can honestly function in life and lend meaning to life. This is the more creative approach to teaching, and an increasing number of teachers are training themselves to master it. It is good to feel oneself part of a fellowship of children's workers, partners learning to teach more effectively.

The study of the Bible is not all of religious teaching. The aim of religious nurture is to develop complete devotion to God as revealed by Jesus and absolute sacrificial

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devotion and loyalty to his purposes. Nor can factual knowledge (the ability to repeat) be taken as a test of religious growth. "Memorized precepts do not necessarily nor perhaps usually carry over into life. . . . The only way to find out whether the teaching of the Bible or any other material is gaining the desired end is to study the effect on the pupils."¹

Start with the New Testament

If teachers are to use Biblical material to stimulate, guide, and lend religious meaning to experience, they will start young children with the New Testament, with incidents from the life and teachings of Jesus. They will seek to select group experience and extra-biblical source materials so that the philosophy of life reflected in the Gospels, The Acts and the Epistles receives added emphasis. No Old Testament material will be used, especially with children under eight years of age, unless it reflects a spirit of love, unselfishness, and purity similar to that found in the New Testament. The Old Testament stories, matchless as they are, will be introduced when the child has begun to develop an historical sense and can see the Old Testament as a record of man's search for God through the centuries and of God's progressive revelation of himself to these seekers. The Old Testament is judged by the teachings of the New, since for Christians, concepts and standards must be determined in the light of New Testament teachings. In addition to the few Old Testament stories that meet this standard and do not require too much historical background, passages selected from the Psalms can quicken the devotional life of the young child.

Emphasis on the New Testament with young children is not so simple a plan as it appears at first, for the New Testament reflects a religious development far in advance of the comprehension of any young child. The message

¹ Myers, A. J. W., *What Is Religious Education?*

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE TEACHER

of the cross and of a Saviour from sin is mature religious theology. Young children do not have the associations, the feeling toward Jesus or toward the Bible that adults sometimes assume that they do.

Let us refer to the incident of Doctor Jones and Doctor Harnack in Chapter I. How may the adult introduce the child to the living Christ and to the historical Jesus? The historical Jesus will be the approach to young children so far as teaching materials are concerned. Theology will not color the stories of Jesus for the young child. The child comes under the influence of the living Christ as Christ lives in the characters of his parents and teachers and as the spirit of Christ is introduced into his environment. Little children may work their way into Christ-like living under such influences.

The heritage of Bible stories gives them narratives of the historical Jesus. Then as life develops and maturity approaches, two lines of religious heritage, one in shared experience and fellowship, the other through the religious heritage from the Book, may meet. So the Spirit of God may enter into the life of the child and weld the two in an inner religious experience.

Overemphasis on even suitable New Testament material may lead, as it has so often done, to a sense of weariness and tedium. The younger the child, the more necessary it is to exercise discretion in the use of Bible materials.

If children are introduced to too much Bible material in the kindergarten and first and second grades, they may, when they are old enough really to profit by the passages, be unwilling to listen to them. The charm, the newness, the appeal must be retained.

A different Bible story for a beginners or a primary child every Sunday in the year is unwise from both the point of view of approach and of method. Sometimes a child's knowledge of the Bible is a sort of hodgepodge

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because he has had no time to reflect, to recall, to enjoy and to use what he has heard. This will be discussed more fully in Chapters V, VI, VII.

While the Bible is regarded as the chief source book, it is not the only revelation of God. "God's whole universe is his book. He reveals himself in the Bible, in history and in literature, in art and in music, in nature and in science, in the factory and in all the daily occupations of everyday life. Out of this storehouse so rich and so varied in its contents the wise steward brings both what is old and new."²

A junior boy's remark in a vacation church school emphasizes the need of using source materials other than the Bible in religious teaching in order to make religion have reality. "When I hear of anybody doing good or right he always lived in the Bible."

The Bible an Adult Book

The Bible was written primarily for adults. It is complex in its make-up. Many of the books included in the Scriptures are compilations of the works of a number of writers, developed in different periods of time and called forth by differing conditions. Some are combinations of several original sources. The Bible sometimes refers to them.³ Other books use common sources in their development, as in the case of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). There are at other times breaks in the continuity of narratives, for connecting passages have been lost. Nor is this surprising when the history of the preservation of the Scriptures is studied. Our wonder grows, and our sense of God's guiding purpose when we see how much has been preserved. The books of the Bible are in some cases a final edition of many religious writings. In

² Myers, A. J. W., *What Is Religious Education?* p. 91.

³ Exodus 24. 7; Numbers 21. 14, 15; II Samuel 1. 17, 18; I Kings 11. 41; 14. 29.

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the first books of the Old Testament, Bible scholars can determine where the narrative from one source leaves off and that from another begins.

The Bible assumes a knowledge of its backgrounds by its readers. For example, when Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, he made no attempt to describe that notorious road which descends steeply from Jerusalem to Jericho, the kind of road with which few American children and adults are familiar. Barren, rocky, desertlike, it lies under the burning heat of the subtropical sun, not a living thing to be seen or heard. Jesus did not give the background of the Jericho road because his hearers knew what the Jericho road was like and that it had been a place of ill repute since the beginning of time. These backgrounds are necessary, however, to add color, reality, and vividness to the Bible story for modern children who live in a different age and clime. Some of the reasons for the vagueness of understanding of the Bible by children and adults alike grow out of their inability to visualize the setting.

The Bible reflects a synthesis of the best in a number of Oriental religions.⁴ The Hebrews, and later the Jews, did not live their religious life untouched by the religions of their neighbors. More and more as a result of recent archeological research and Biblical scholarship we ordinary folk are learning how neighboring religions affected the religious life of the Hebrews. Expeditions are reconstructing entire civilizations that they have unearthed.

The Bible grew out of the lives of people, many of whose life problems were much like problems today. On the other hand, some were radically different. This makes the Bible a difficult book for children who know nothing of historical backgrounds and who, as young children, are so limited in an historical sense that they cannot appreciate

⁴Read Harris, Charles W., *The Hebrew Heritage*, and Leslie, Elmer A., *Old Testament Religion*.

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them. Unless the teacher is wise, the children are likely to have an idea that the Bible is other-worldly. One little girl, looking at a picture of Jesus and the Children, put her finger on the Oriental house in the picture. "I would like to know about this kind of home," she said, "but I couldn't. That's heaven." Childhood is a good time for a study of backgrounds. This study, in turn, is an essential foundation for intelligent and serious continuity in Bible study later on.

The Bible is also difficult for children because it deals with mature religious experience and theology. Emotional poise and growth is necessary to understand much of its teachings. Symbolisms are constantly used for illustrative purposes, and children under ten or eleven years of age do not understand symbols. There is much in the religion of the Bible that cannot be explained to children until they grow up to it. To try to teach a verbal knowledge before experience makes truth comprehensible is to hand on a second-handed religion and to dull mental enthusiasm and responsibility. Complete religious maturity is not necessary, of course. But there must be some understanding, something genuine to tie to.

Have a Clear Purpose

Whenever the teacher selects Biblical material for use with children, he will state his purpose clearly and concisely in terms of its contribution to child nurture. Wise teachers avoid all vague statements of aim. They attempt to determine what the Bible material will contribute in terms of clearer ideas of God, more thoughtful attitudes toward Jesus, better understandings of Christian points of view, stimuli to conduct, solutions to puzzling problems either individual or group, opportunities for worshipful expression, guidance in Christian service. Using Biblical material purposefully is an essential in home and church-school teaching today.

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Use the Bible to Enrich Ideas of God

Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the necessity for using Biblical material so that it will not confuse children's ideas of God. A reason for withholding Old Testament material from younger children is that their picture of God may not be distorted by contact with various pre-Christian ideas. Many adults suffer from confused ideas of God today because of the teaching they received during childhood and have never outgrown. Old Testament conceptions of God should be withheld from children until they are able to place them in an historical setting. This ability does not develop before late childhood. A group of primary children were hearing of a Bible character. "Wait a minute," said one boy. "Was that before the Pilgrims? I know about them."

No Bible story should be used unless it is likely to help a child think of God in terms of the best that he is capable of imagining. Madge came home from church school one Sunday in a distressed state of mind. She was five years old. The teacher had told the story of Noah's ark that morning. This is not a suitable story for young children, of course, because it cannot be used in its proper context. Four- and five-year-olds have no historical sense. Madge's teacher, in order to make the story vivid, had expanded it. "God was so angry with these people," she said, "that he said to himself, 'I am going to kill them all, even the little babies.'" She had continued in this strain. Madge told mother, "God killed even the baby kittens, and the baby rabbits, and even little babies. Mother, God isn't as good as you are. You would not do that." Needless to say, this child's experience at church had done her more harm than good because it had lowered her idea of God. While a child's idea of God may be crude and immature, and he naturally thinks of God as a big man, God should have the qualities of personality that are the highest the child has experienced or can conceive. The teacher had caused

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Madge to attribute to God personal qualities lower than those which she had already experienced at home.

Keep in Mind Age of Pupil

If the principles already discussed are to be followed, only a graded course of study can be used, for the age of the child is necessarily kept in mind. The teacher is familiar with the limitations and the religious needs of the age group. He selects those materials that are best suited to guide the religious growth of children at each stage.

All adults who help children through the use of the Bible will accept the natural limitations of child life. Just as a child has not stature physically to reach a high kitchen-cabinet shelf and store the dishes away, just as he is unable to walk the miles that his sturdy father trudges, just as his delicate nervous organism is unable to take such stimulants as coffee and tea without harm, just so he is unable to understand much of the Bible, both mentally and spiritually. One of the real problems of religious teachers is to know how to withhold as well as how to give. A profitable study for any adult leads to a discovery of what children really understand from what they hear, how they think, what lies under the surface of factual knowledge. Sometimes the truth surprises even the experienced teacher. A bright little six-year-old child was repeating glibly: "Children, obey your parents. Children, obey your parents." "Who are your parents?" she was asked. She stopped and looked puzzled. "I don't know," she said, hesitatingly. Later on the little girl asked, "Are brothers and sisters parents?"

The writer recalls a visit to a rural church just before Christmas. She joined the beginners class, a group of five little children under six years of age meeting in one corner of the room. The children's minds were filled with Santa Claus, with all the joys and beauty of the Christmas season. They had been chattering happily about the approaching festival as they arrived. Every now and then some child

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would introduce Christmas. The teacher would say, "Hush, that is not what the lesson is about today," and resuming her quarterly, she would begin again to read to the children the story of Paul in prison. Here was a group of little children, minds set on Christmas, and lives completely absorbed in the approaching festivities. Here was a church and a church-school teacher ignoring a wonderful opportunity for religious nurture. The name of Jesus was not mentioned, nor a religious interpretation of Christmas. Child interest and the so-called lesson were miles apart. Yet this happens of necessity to little children whenever adults ignore one of the fundamental principles of life, the principle of gradation.

The contrast between this kindergarten group and the one visited the preceding Sunday was evident. Here the children were working on Christmas presents in interest groups, learning the joy of giving as well as of receiving. A large suit box stood in the worship center. As they entered, child after child placed clean clothing in good condition in it. A leader talked about how happy the children at ————— would be to have this clothing. She made the picture so alluring one little four-year-old stood clapping his hands together happily. Over in one window was a transparency of the Wise Men. Two children stood before it with wondering eyes. "And you did take presents to the baby Jesus, didn't you?" one child was saying, softly. The air was spicy with evergreens. Song, story, prayer, activity all lent religious meaning to a great Christian festival.

A baby comes into life unable to walk, to talk, to know and to care for himself. No one expects such miracles of him physically. Adults do not ask a three-year-old child to read or write, or a four-year-old to earn his living. Yet in the past, and too much in the present, the impossible in the realm of the social and the spiritual has been expected of most little children.

It is God's plan that life should reproduce itself in the

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helpless baby, that this baby should develop through a long period into childhood, into youth, into manhood. Any approach to the use of the Bible that starts with material and seeks to bend child life to it instead of choosing material to nurture child life is directly opposed to one of the realities of the universe, that of the gradual unfolding of life's powers. None of the many arguments offered at times in behalf of a uniform system of lessons can overcome the seriousness of the violation of such a fundamental factor.

Another practice with unfortunate results, the twisting and misinterpretation of Biblical material, is necessary when any adaptation of an adult lesson to children is purposed. Of necessity something has to be planned for the child. The selected references are unsuitable and the temptation to over-simplify and to use interpretations that cannot be justified in the light of Bible study follows.

Adults as well as children are handicapped when a uniform system of lessons is selected. The adult's study is limited to the simpler, less advanced or narrative portions of the Bible. This restriction on Bible knowledge existed throughout the entire period when Uniform Lessons were officially "adapted" for use with children under twelve years of age. Two books of the New Testament were never included in these outlines during the period when they were so planned. Yet these books set forth great Christian doctrines and should never have been omitted from a course planned for adults.

Since 1924 there has been no official adaptation of International Uniform Lessons for children under twelve years of age. Adult leaders have been free to provide a much more worth-while study of the Bible for older classes. So the Uniform Lessons have steadily increased in effectiveness since they escaped from the limitations that the former situation placed upon them. Such progress in study of the Bible is heartening.

There are in existence certain courses of study for chil-

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dren that are labeled "graded" and claim to use Bible material every Sunday. They are called graded only by courtesy since they indicate no real knowledge of child life, its needs or its limitations. Some use good method but show no discrimination in choice of purpose or material.

Help Children to Stand on Their Own Feet in Bible Study

The helpful teacher or parent is the one who so guides that children are progressively released from any need for adult guidance. Beginning with the little child, the adult will attempt to assist him in forming habits of thinking about what he is learning. He will be allowed to go slowly enough to form habits of mental responsibility, of pondering on what he hears instead of receiving it idly. The leader will show children how to find out things for themselves and to know how and what to seek in the use of the Bible. The teacher will impart knowledge only when it is impossible for the child to secure it from any other source. Along with this independence of activity the adult will seek to stimulate wholehearted enthusiasm for a keener understanding in all the fields touching on Bible study. Telling Bible stories to children can retard their religious development unless the method is used with restraint and is accompanied by training in reflection, by opportunities to practice techniques for studying the Bible for oneself and by practice in living according to Bible principles.

The teacher will never teach in a dogmatic manner, that is, as if adults knew all the answers, for this defeats his purpose of stimulating continued study.

Questions (answer two)

Write a statement showing how you would help a parent to a wiser point of view when he insisted on a Bible story every Sunday for a group of young children.

Imagine yourself a parent whose child is enrolled in a department using unsuitable Bible materials. How would you explain the use of Bible materials to guide life?

Choose a Bible reference suitable for the age group with which

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you work. What is your purpose for its use? Suggest methods that would make it effective.

Why is a graded selection of Biblical material essential?

For Further Study

Curriculum of Religious Education, Bower, William Clayton. Chapters I—IV. Harpers.

What Is Religious Education? Myers, A. J. W. Chapter V. National Sunday School Union, London.

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE TEACHER

(CONTINUED)

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

1. Visit a public-school grade for children of the age you teach. Make a list of all the memory work required for the year. Find out how long a period of time is given to its mastery. Contrast what you discover with plans for memorization for the same child at church both as to quantity, type of material, time element.

2. Make an outline of your class sessions for the last month. How many methods did you use? For accomplishing what purposes?

Seek Variety in Method

The best and most attractive methods of teaching should be discovered and incorporated into the procedure. Many of our church schools are handicapped by the dreary sameness of the sessions. Teachers consider sometimes that they are not teaching the Bible except when they tell a Bible story, drill on "memory" verses, and ask a few questions that usually are not thought-provoking. Sunday after Sunday the same plan is used, a teacher-centered one. "She never lets us do anything," one girl in the third grade complained. A junior boy came home from church school all alert. "Boy, we've got some swell references to look up for next Sunday!" he exclaimed. A junior high-school group spent every Sunday afternoon during an entire autumn turning the book of Judges into ballads. They did genuine research in backgrounds. Boys and girls are trained in public school to be self-directive in their study and work. They respond to guidance, but not to telling. Teachers, not pupils, complain of the newer methods and think too little Bible is included, when the real trouble arises from a lack of understanding of choices in method. The Bible

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is emphasized, but the plans for teaching it do not follow a rut so far as method is concerned.

There should be a greater emphasis on the devotional use of Biblical material and on plans for worship training. Primary and junior children can select passages from the Psalms. They may be set to music and used as beautiful responses in times of joy and achievement. These passages have power to lift children to a high plane of worship, to a consciousness of God's presence.

Dramatization with younger children and pageants with older boys and girls lend interest to the church-school session. A junior group who refused to study the Bible were charmed by a chance to write a dramatic story of Jesus. The children were not really reacting negatively to the life of Jesus, but were weary of sameness of teaching method. Possibly some of the adult's lack of interest in the Bible grows out of former tiresome methods of teaching it. Tests, riddles, the writing of poems based on Biblical incidents; the writing of songs; all sorts of constructive activities such as making friezes—all of these are methods that may be used in teaching the Bible to children. The wise teacher varies his method. He never becomes a slave to any plan of teaching the Bible. This statement does not mean to suggest that he will jump from one method to another merely to "entertain" children. While the learning experience should be enjoyable it should never become so shallow and unorganized that it requires no thought of the pupil.

Teach Thoroughly

"Plan for overlearning" is as good a principle in religious education as in public-school work. When Biblical material is used, it should be taught thoroughly. The average church-school class has about twenty-four hours of teaching time a year. It can usually count on most pupils being absent for some of this period. Churches will plan expanded Sunday sessions and vacation church schools

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just as rapidly as adequate leadership and equipment permit. It would be impossible for the church school to give all the necessary teaching of the Bible.

Nor is that its major task. The major task of the church school is to guide children into a group fellowship that offers them chances to learn to live Christian lives along with other people, through service, fellowship, study and worship. Study of the Bible is one important phase of the process and lends meaning to the others. The church reaps a sad reward from a neglect of the other phases.

The home accepts an important part of the privilege of teaching the Bible if the task is to be well done. This is true not only because of the time element involved, but because the Bible must be learned in connection with practice in daily life. Parents and children will study and practice its teachings together. "Mother," a young man asked in puzzled fashion, "how do I happen to know so much about the Bible? Where did I learn it?" "I did not remind him," the mother reported, "that it was as much a part of our home when he was a child as the meal times." The church that permits parents to believe that their responsibility for teaching the Bible to children can be solved by enrolling their children in a church-school class is failing to call parents to one of their high privileges and duties. The parent connects the Bible with the religious life of at least one social group, the family, the church school with that of others.

If the Bible is to be taught thoroughly to children, limit must be placed on quantity of references. What is selected will be tied in with certain units of work that give the children chances to use judgment in making choices that they may live in groups dominated by Christian principles. A church school is the only place where adults expect a child to hear a story and repeat a Bible verse one Sunday and to return the following Sunday able to recite both. The younger the child, the more he forgets in so long an interval as a week.

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The Unit of Work

Teachers do thorough teaching when they cease to think of each Sunday's work as an isolated "lesson." When certain units of work or groups of sessions organized into units of living are used, Biblical material will be selected in connection with life, needs, and experiences. This is the natural, spontaneous approach to Biblical material. For example, it is seemingly easy just to tell the story of the good Samaritan and drill on the verse, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," if the teacher's only purpose is to help pupils gain a factual knowledge of the parable.

This is using the Bible story and the verse out of association with life. Shall we contrast this approach with the use of this same reference by a certain junior group? A member of the class who was not popular became sick. There was a heated discussion of whether or not the class would plan anything for his comfort or pleasure. "He doesn't deserve anything. He wastes our time by his foolishness," Tom said, heatedly. The teacher did not seek to influence the pupils at first. She led them gradually to see the handicaps of the boy and his desire to be noticed by other boys and girls. The group finally decided to send a surprise "Sunshine" box. This was to contain little inexpensive gifts for each day carefully wrapped and placed in a large box. The teacher suggested as the class worked that they were making something which Fred really needed; that he did not have many things to make his stay in the sick-room pleasant. She said in a natural manner that one of Jesus' attitudes toward people was to help them wherever they had need. "I doubt if he ever asked whether a person deserved to be helped," she remarked, casually. She spoke of how keen Jesus was to see what people's needs were and how he was able to understand them. She asked the group to turn to the Bible and read Luke 10. 25-37. "See if you can understand how Jesus described his attitude toward people and their need through this story,"

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she suggested. A new conception of a parable of Jesus and of why Jesus used parables came to the group. The good Samaritan was not only Bible material to hear and to remember, but the incident had been lifted to the higher learning level of motivating attitude and conduct. It was introduced to point to an illuminating attitude toward persons and to the life and parables of Jesus. The material was recalled in the midst of activities from time to time.

A wasteful method of teaching is to use a story, drop it next week and go on to other material. No wonder children do not learn by this method. Another wasteful method of teaching is to use a Bible passage printed in a quarterly, ask questions about it, tell a few illustrations in connection with it—most of which are usually unrelated to the lives of children—fill in a few blank spaces, and then go on to another passage the next Sunday. Teachers will make it a rule to teach thoroughly any selected Biblical material. They will state as a principle that this material is not really taught when it is merely grasped as factual knowledge, but only when it has begun to influence thought, conduct, and attitude. The ability to recognize such characters as Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph is not genuine knowledge of the Bible, nor is the memorization of such passages as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes effective Bible teaching in itself. Memorization is valuable only when carried out functionally, that is, in connection with thinking, feeling, doing.

Use Care in the Interpretation of Bible Passages and Narratives

The teacher will avoid doing violence to the interpretation of Bible passages. Bible stories will teach only what manifestly they were originally meant to teach. The story of Jacob at Bethel is sometimes told in the kindergarten to teach God's care at night, but this is placing a story out of its context. Many stories in the Old Testament have

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to be reserved for older childhood for this reason. So do certain New Testament materials.

Introduce Background and the Expansion of the Bible Story with Discrimination

The next principle has to do with expansion of Bible stories to include sufficient background for understanding. How far can a teacher expand a Bible story without doing violence to meaning? What will be the result of these expanded stories on children when they are able to read the account in the Bible for themselves? These are questions that every thoughtful teacher must sense and to which there is no clear-cut answer at present. It is necessary to expand Bible stories in order to give setting and background for young children. The Bible is an adult book and was not written for children. A teacher should have an accurate knowledge of Bible backgrounds and should expand a story only in keeping with the facts of its geographical, historical, social, and economic backgrounds.

Old Testament stories should not be "dressed up" to make them appear Christian. When this plan is followed, conduct in the Old Testament that is comprehensible from the point of view of an early age of religious development becomes indefensible. If palliated, the use of the story confuses the child's understanding of Christian standards of conduct.

One of the glories of the Bible is that it can show men as they are with all human weaknesses and vice and strength and still help other men to be religious. The Bible never excuses sin, but it does not try to make characters impossibly good. It shows moral growth and failure and continued aspiration. Its people's religious struggles have authority just because they are real people, not cardboard figures. David was called a man after God's own heart, and a study of his story reveals why. Yet the Bible does not hesitate to record a heinous sin and to call him a man of blood. The great teachers of Judaism knew life

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and how to influence choice and character. Modern teachers must be faithful to their portrayals. It is a healthy sign of increasing Bible knowledge and of religious insight when teachers cease trying to make over the Bible. There was a time when teachers tried to justify Jacob's meanness and deceit where Esau was concerned. The reaction to a greater honesty is fortunate. If a story needs much revamping to use it with a certain age group, it is unsuitable for the group.

The teacher should ponder seriously before adding entire incidents and blocks of imagery to Bible stories. Even first-grade children should often see the Bible in the teacher's hands. It is well to say to a group of primary children, "Would you like to know exactly how the Bible tells this story? Of course I have put in details so that you could understand the place where it happened and the life of the people. This is the way the story reads in the Bible." Older children should have chances to read narratives for themselves. The practice leads to a better appreciation of Bible stories than does so much telling of expanded Bible stories by teachers. Especially is this true beginning with the fourth grade, when children begin to read with a degree of ease. A good story for initiating the method with primary children is the Christmas story.

Almost an apocrypha of imaginary stories has grown up about the boyhood of Jesus. Interest in the life of the boy Jesus, its charm for children and growth in knowledge of Biblical backgrounds are reasons why so many tales have been written in the last decade. If they reflect accurately the life and customs of the time of Jesus, and if the teacher tells the children that these are the kinds of experiences that a normal Jewish boy of Jesus' time would have had, they will probably be of value in building a sense of kinship with the boy Jesus. Teachers from the second grade on should say, "This story is not in the Bible." Third-grade children can begin to know the sources on which the stories are based.

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Introduce Various Versions

As rapidly as children are interested in the Bible as a book, probably beginning with the second grade, they should be taught to refer to various versions. Suppose the children are to learn a Bible passage to use in a worship service. Their teacher helps them to find it in several versions—King James, American Standard, and some of the modern ones, such as the Goodspeed and the Moffatt translations. The children select the version for memorization for themselves. Even children in the second and third grades can begin to learn that the Bible was not written originally in English and can have some idea of what a translation means. This is much easier to explain than it would have been ten years ago, since children, through the libraries and in the public school, are constantly coming in contact with translations of dearly beloved stories. The children will not become enslaved to any one translation of the Bible. They will know before they can recall how they learned it, that there is no such thing as an authorized version of the Bible, that no one translation is "the" Bible. The sooner children understand this, the better their chance for intelligent study of the Bible as they grow older.

Safeguard Children from Conflicting Interpretations

Thoughtful parents and teachers who try to use the Bible wisely with children constantly report the problem that arises from conflicting interpretations of certain passages or the introduction of children to unsuitable Biblical material by other adults. There is too little agreement among the adults who guide the child as to how to influence him religiously. A six-year-old boy constantly turned a deaf ear to all Biblical material. When a story was begun in church school, he would inquire, "Is that from the Bible?" If it was, he would say, "Then I won't listen to it." He would even put his hands over his ears. Investigation showed that this child had been frightened by his

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grandmother when he was quite little. She had insisted upon his listening to unsuitable Bible stories, telling him that God would visit him with dire punishment unless he did. The mother felt helpless to deal with the situation.

Other teachers report how children bring illustrated books of Bible stories unsuited to the age of the child into a church-school group. These books often raise religious problems from which the child should have been safeguarded, so long as it is almost impossible for him to face them successfully and helpfully. Margaret was recovering from scarlet fever. A neighbor gave her a book of Bible stories compiled without discrimination in the selection of material. The mother began to read the book with misgivings but in loyalty to her neighbor. While reading a certain Old Testament story the mother was called away for a time. When she returned, Margaret said, "Mother, don't read any more of that book to me. I don't think I am going to like God very well. He does such bad things."

Church-school teachers of various age groups, and, indeed, within an age group, will try to avoid hindering each other's work and confusing the children by their contradictory teaching of ideas of God and of Jesus, points of view toward the Bible and their selection of Bible material. The child should have contact with more than one point of view, of course, but each teacher should seek to understand and to guide the children to concepts that are definitely Christian and at the same time suited to the child's maturity.

Believe What You Teach

Certain earnest young teachers just out of college and others with inquiring minds have often raised the question in conferences, "How shall I teach certain Biblical passages?" referring to the miracles. This is a puzzling problem, and principles only can be suggested. The teacher will teach what he believes himself, being careful to base

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his belief on intelligent study and thoughtful and devotional use of the Bible rather than upon prejudices or unfounded or hastily assumed convictions. If the teacher will be absolutely honest, and he is also studying and seeking really to know the word of truth, he will follow this principle. A study of what miracles signify in the life of Jesus is essential.¹

As a second principle may we suggest that there is nothing crude or naïve in a belief in the miraculous? It is only when the miraculous becomes narrowed to a demand for a material representation that it blocks out the mystical

¹ "The 'mighty works' of Jesus were regarded both by himself (Mt. 11. 2-6) and by others (Lk. 7. 16) as 'signs.' In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter stated the case as follows: 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know' (Acts 2. 22). The Greek word translated 'mighty works' is literally 'powers,' and in other connections could be rendered 'capacities.' Jesus—so we might paraphrase it—possessed a divinely given capacity whereby he wrought striking deeds, which were to be taken as signs. . . .

"The central feature of the miracle is therefore to be sought in its *signification*. Jesus 'did many signs,' as even his enemies admitted (Jn. 11. 47). But a sign does not stand by itself: it is always a sign *of* something. The miracles of Jesus signified his possession of capacities; they signified that the capacities were of such a character that they must be God-given in a peculiar sense; and they signified that one who possessed these God-given capacities was in himself different from all other men.

"As we shall see later, the whole question of N. T. miracle and its credibility depends upon this element of 'difference' in Christ himself. (See Garvie, *Handbook of Apologetics*, ch. 3, pt. iii; Illingworth, *The Gospel Miracles*, pp. 40, 41.) The miracles are a 'sign' of that difference. *But that very difference is also itself a sign.* It is a sign of the God who sent him, of the God who indwelt him, of the God of whom his whole life was an increasing revelation. Thus he always made the testimony of his miracles secondary to the testimony of his own person. It was, he said, a greater thing to believe in him for his own sake than it was to believe in him because of his 'works' (Jn. 12. 44-50; 14. 10, 11)." —From "The Miracles of the New Testament," by Professor Edwin Lewis, in *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 921. Reprinted by permission.

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experience (a faith in or practice of spiritual perception not based on intellectual or material proofs). Then it hinders religious development. An insistence on belief in the miraculous to bolster faith can be first cousin to doubt. The adult who has developed to the plane of mystical experience will pray:

"I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away."²

Many kindergarten and first-grade teachers are overzealous about trying to explain or avoid miracles. The problem exists more in the mind of the teacher than in the children's thinking. To young children most of life is miraculous, so the teacher is setting up a straw man to tilt at if she goes into too expanded an explanation or seeks to avoid stories because they have miraculous elements. On the other hand, a teacher who tells one of the stories of Jesus' helpfulness merely as a story of the miraculous is not using the material in a way most helpful religiously to children, nor is she clear about its real message.

There was a time when teachers overemphasized the miraculous to the point of the magical in order to "hold the interest and attention of the class." In the days of a simpler civilization they may have been successful. But one experienced teacher, a pupil in a school of religion, made a succinct judgment on this practice. "Bible stories can't hold their own with modern stories in pep and marvelousness. Therefore, children prefer stories of today. How can we lift the use of the Bible above this trend?"

In a time when wonders have become as commonplace as they have in the modern age, a teacher who tells Bible stories as mere wonder stories is not only failing her purpose but she is bound to lose. The movies and the radio alone would make this true. One boy in a junior class

² George Croly, No. 179, stanza 2, *The Methodist Hymnal*.

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listened to a story in which the magical had clouded the real purpose of the story so far as the teacher was concerned. She told it thoughtlessly, just as a thrilling story. When she finished, the boy looked at her in a puzzled way. "Do you think that is so wonderful?" he said. "You should have been at the movie with me last night and seen what I saw." In a telling way he had pointed out the uselessness of the teacher's approach.

The teacher's emphasis will be upon the spiritual realities, warmth of human helpfulness, tenderness to oppressed and downtrodden, joy in finding God and loving him, knowing the presence of his Spirit, admiration for the matchless life of Jesus, and unceasing acceptance and devotion to him. Reverent and careful searching of the Scriptures will be pursued and a sound foundation laid so that with maturity of experience the living Christ may enter into his pupils' hearts and find a welcome there.

Questions (choose two)

Check on the Bible material suggested for the unit of work you are now teaching. List purposes for the use of each selection.

Criticize this phrase from a story of David and Jonathan turned in as an assignment in a class in storytelling: "Our dear Christian boy David knew that he must show God's love to Jonathan."

After reading this chapter, what do you think are the real reasons that teachers complain about the difficulty of holding the child's interest in Bible stories?

Can you explain this situation? A twelve-year-old girl said: "I am not going to church school any more. I have heard all about Paul I ever want to hear." Why was the life of Paul "so uninteresting"?

Review the incident of Margaret. What problem had the use of the Genesis stories developed with this child?

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CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHER'S STUDY

To Answer Before Reading This Chapter

What does a teacher or a parent need to know in order to use the Bible helpfully with children?

What have you read or studied in the Bible during the last month? Do not include in your answer its use for teaching purposes.

The Challenge to Bible Study

Children are interested in and take for granted those elements in daily life that influence adults. What the adult recognizes as a natural part of the daily round is likely to have charm and compelling power for the child, since adults set the tone and place the values for him. The church-school teacher finds it almost impossible to teach the Bible with effective result to children who come from homes where a copy of the Bible is probably owned, but it is used as a depository for souvenirs and papers, never read, never referred to in conversation. When adults have curiosity and desire for further Bible study, it is not hard to interest children in the contents of the Bible.

Since adult interest quickens child eagerness, let us visit groups of teachers and of parents and see if we can discover present-day practices in study of the Bible by adults. We shall join parents' discussion groups, attend conventions, summer schools and conferences, schools of religion—in fact, we shall visit any group who will give a better insight into the subject. The following question was once asked of a group composed of about seventy-five parents and church-school workers enrolled in a certain summer school of religion: "How have you studied the Bible within the last month?" The written answers were confidential.

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Except for studying Sunday-school lessons, only one member of the group had read the Bible during the month. She added to her report that she and her husband looked up the pastor's text one Sunday in order to disprove his interpretation of it. Several hundred teachers of children and parents in a state Sunday-school convention were asked the same question. In no case had there been any Bible study outside the regular "lesson."

The question brought almost identical answers when raised in a school of religion. Bible reading had been confined to brief unrelated passages printed in a book of devotions. Two members of the group were studying the Bible seriously.

The writer then asked a group of teachers in a departmental workers' conference, "What personal problems do you sense in Bible Study?" One earnest teacher who is constantly seeking for new light on the Bible made the confession: "I find it so hard to keep my mind on the Bible. My attention wanders. My problem really is how to find zest in studying the Bible." Another teacher said: "When I try to read the Bible, I think of all the terrible things in it that frightened me so when I was a child. It is hard for me to realize the beauty and comfort of the Bible even today. If my teachers only had not made me afraid in Sunday school!" With one exception the other teachers reported that they would like to study the Bible but they did not know how to do serious Bible study.

A church-school superintendent said to one of his teachers, "We shall just have to catch these children and make them learn the Bible because they will never see or hear of it outside the church, and you may be sure they will never read it when they get older." A parent was reporting a behavior problem of his little girl. He said, "I told her 'I will be glad when you get big enough to take to Sunday school, where they will teach you the Bible.'" Since the adult sets the example for child interest and activity, a serious and appreciative study of the Bible by

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teachers and parents is the first essential in teaching children.

There is a personal reason too, for continuous study of the Bible. The Bible holds a message of truth and of life, and adults can ill afford to shut themselves off from a reverent, thoughtful quest for its meanings. Adults need not to be discouraged, but to be challenged by the wonderful present-day opportunities for Bible study. We adults know more than we sometimes realize about the Bible. We need reorganization and enrichment of knowledge in this field as in most others. This is the important emphasis in all modern adult education. No earnest father, mother, or teacher will hesitate long in undertaking this great adventure. How fortunate is our generation that riches of study of archeological expeditions and of great research are poured out for it as for no other age! Rapidity in growth of knowledge is one reason why adults need further study. The common people have never had an opportunity parallel to ours for knowing the Scriptures.

Knowledge of Child Life

What background does a teacher need in order properly to teach the Bible to children? When this question was asked of several groups of teachers, the answer was threefold; first, a knowledge of child life that they may be able to choose Biblical material valuable in guiding it. This point will be discussed more fully in Chapters V-X.

Studying the Bible

The second essential was a knowledge of the Bible. This might be termed Biblical literacy. Teachers should not only study books about the Bible, but should read the Bible in order to discover its message. More than one version should be studied, not merely read. The original copies of the books of the Bible were not written in English; so any English version is a translation. It is helpful to compare translations in order to receive new ideas about

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the text. The writer's first real flash of insight into the meaning of the first chapter of the Gospel of John came from reading a French translation of the Bible. It was akin to revelation to discover the French word, practically untranslatable into English, that was used for "the Word."

The following translations are available to readers. The King James version was translated in the early seventeenth century. It incorporated the several English versions that preceded it, used in the printed Greek New Testament of Erasmus in its revision by Stephanus. It was the work of a group of scholars appointed by King James I of England to bring order out of the confusion of many existing and, in some cases, rival versions. The English language was in one of its great flowering periods at the time of the first Stuart king, so for rhythm and literary beauty of diction, this version holds an unrivaled place. The King Edward Bible most nearly approaches it. However, English is a living language, and in more than three hundred years meanings change. Within these three hundred years there have been great discoveries throwing new light on the Bible, discoveries of older manuscripts that give more accurate sources, for example. So while the King James version is undoubtedly matchless as literature, it is neither the most accurate translation nor the most easily understood by modern readers who know nothing of middle English out of which modern English had recently emerged when the King James version was made.

The American Standard version is the work of another group of Bible scholars, both in Great Britain and the United States. For accuracy and exactness it is the translation that is to be recommended. Probably persons will wish to study both translations—one for the effect of great literature and rhythm or for devotional use, and the other in order to be faithful scholars of an accurate translation.

In addition to both of these translations, a modern one, such as Goodspeed and Smith, *The Bible, an American*

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Translation, should be on hand. *The New Testament, a New Translation*, by James Moffatt, may be used. Whatever adults do, they will read the Bible itself in order to know it. They will study it intelligently and thoughtfully to increase their knowledge of its teachings. They will avoid reading meanings that only becloud true understanding into any study of the Bible.

Biblical Background

The third essential listed for teachers of children was a knowledge of Biblical backgrounds. The Bible itself cannot be understood in any adequate sense without this additional study.

Teachers will determine what the Bible is and why it should be studied. It is true that the Bible is a library of books, that it is a history of a people, that it is great literature that has nurtured English literature throughout the centuries. These are not the final reasons why persons study the Bible, however. The Bible is the greatest book of religion the world has ever known. It reveals the nature and will of God for man and man's relation to his God.

Teachers will find it helpful to place the Bible in terms of the periods out of which it came. The Bible was written to meet religious need, not in general, but in specific situations over a period of fifteen hundred years. The Bible has universal meaning, it is true, for it deals with the realities of life and brings the message of God to men of all ages, but the religious situations that called it forth and the purposes back of its first writings must be discovered. A mastery of thought forms current among the people who wrote the Bible and for whom it was written clarifies many a puzzling point. Even the New Testament, that at times is so startlingly modern, was written for the people who lived in the first century A. D. Their understanding and thought were different from our own. When Jesus taught the common people who thronged about him in Galilee, he was speaking to folk who had a

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background of commonly accepted religious ideas, philosophy of life, and definite convictions about God, man, and society.¹ But this body of belief and of thought form was not that popularly accepted in twentieth-century America.

Many of the ideas of the universe were different in Bible times than those that are commonly accepted today. Modern man takes it for granted that his earth is a planet held in space by certain laws, a part of a solar system that in turn is part of many other great star systems. The earth in Bible times was regarded as a flat surface with an arch above it. This is only one example of differences in thought and belief between Bible times and our own.

To understand a book in the Bible it is necessary to know something about the conditions back of it. Many references in Paul's epistles are incomprehensible until the reader knows of the existence of the numerous religious cults that flourished in the Roman world of the first century A. D.

In ancient times, just as now, illustrations familiar to the thought of the people were used. If one is to understand these illustrations the New Testament must be fitted into the framework and ideas of its time. When we come to Old Testament times we are lost in the complexity and variety of its books unless we do gain some background of understanding. One of the great services of Bowie's *The Story of the Bible* is its placement of the prophetic messages in the setting of their times.

A knowledge of the daily customs reflected in a book of the Bible is helpful. How did the people live? What kind of houses did they build? What trades did they pursue? What were their relationships with other nations and peoples? What were their ideas about home life and relationships between men and women? How did they

¹ For a study of current religious ideas in Palestine in the time of Jesus, see Stapfer, *Jesus Christ Before His Ministry*, Chap. II.

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regard child life? What kind of flowers did they see blooming in the fields? What kind of crops did they harvest? Were they agricultural or urban? Until the mind attains such vivid pictures, the Bible is a blank to the teacher, and of necessity to the children. It is as though the teacher stood looking through a tiny window at life and in turn tried to describe it to children. How little inspiration the children receive from any introduction to Biblical material unless the teacher sees vividly pictures of real life.

A knowledge of geography and social history helps in an understanding of the Bible. Sometimes a chapter will be flooded with light just because there is new knowledge of the setting. When we understand that Sisera's chariots were built for fighting in the plains and that they were bogged in a sudden freshet in the hill country of Canaan, the incident takes on life and meaning.² It is customary even today for adventurous young men to act as a guard over the flocks of great sheep owners along the desert range in the south country of Palestine. The sheep owner expects to pay for this protection. When the custom is understood, David's demand upon Nabal becomes a legitimate one.³ Social history is one of the most valuable approaches that can be made to the Bible during late childhood. This approach will be discussed in detail in the chapters on the use of the Bible with the first six grades.

Technique in Bible Study

Now that we have background materials and some understanding of the thought forms of the people for whom the book was first prepared, some knowledge of social customs and historical and economic settings, how shall we read the book? The teacher may read blocks of Biblical material at a time. For example, an epistle is a letter, unless it happens to be like II Corinthians, a combina-

² Judges, Chaps. IV and V.

³ I Samuel, Chap. XXV.

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tion of parts of two letters. We do not usually read a letter in snatches and expect to grasp its contents. Most books of the Bible can be read at a sitting. To get the sweep of the book it is well to study larger blocks at a time. One of the real disadvantages of most plans for daily Bible reading is that people are led to read such small unrelated sections.

Teachers will wish to acquire skill in methods of Bible study. It is helpful to be able to contrast the religious ideas, economic situations, and stages of the development of the God idea of the book that one is studying with similar themes in other books of the Bible. For example, the conditions of living, ideas of God, social and economic development that are back of the book of Judges are entirely different from those reflected in the book of Amos. When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians, he was advising a people facing religious needs and living under conditions other than those which we touch through a study of I Samuel.

Until the various books and writings are placed historically as well as in terms of problems, the general scope of the Bible is not realized. Professor Rae in the article, "How to Study the Bible," in *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, suggests that the first step in reading the Old Testament is to map out periods, placing each book in its historical setting. He suggests that there were eight divisions during the period of the Old Testament.⁴

When we begin to realize that the Old Testament contains not one idea of God, but a record of the growth of the God idea through the centuries, the pattern of the Old Testament becomes more comprehensible.

Another interesting study of the Bible follows the

⁴ *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, pp. 109-113, furnishes a chart prepared by Dr. Elmer A. Leslie that dates the periods and the Old Testament literature which was developed during each one. A similar chronology of the New Testament will be found on page 879, *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*.

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changes in social and economic conditions that bring changes in thought and in religious understandings. The prophets may be so approached. The book of Amos stands out in bold relief, when we read it against the background of a corrupt, material-centered civilization in Samaria, an urban civilization, and realize that Amos is condemning it by the standards of an earlier more ascetic desert culture. There is a sharp arraignment of conventional ritual practices. Righteousness, not sacrifice, is God's requirement. Amos thunders at wealthy, conventional, self-assured Samaria. The book of Amos is one of the books of the Old Testament whose religious value for modern life grows out of the fact that it met a social situation so like the one in which modern man finds himself struggling.

Devotional Approach

There is a devotional use of the Bible over and above any study such as this chapter has suggested heretofore. This generation looks with wistfulness and longing upon the exalted steadiness of faith that its ancestors once developed just from a repeated reading of the New Testament itself. In spite of the value of the study approach, the teacher will not neglect the devotional use of the Scriptures. However, for modern man the pathway to a devotional use of the Bible may often emerge from study and careful examination. One of the fine recent contributions to Bible study along this line is *Seven Psalms*, by Adelaide Case.⁵ In this small volume stimulating Bible study is combined with devotional use. More studies of this type are needed.

There is still another method of Bible study. The account of an incident in a certain book will be contrasted with the account of the same incident in others; as, for example, in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The same incident may be described, but there are

⁵Published by the Women's Press.

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illuminating details to be found in one account that the others will not give. Such a comparative study of the resurrection story, for example, is enlightening.

Discovering Teaching Values

Pastors, teachers, and parents will profit by study of the Bible according to teaching values. The group may wish, for example, to start with the life of Christ. They will begin with the nativity stories, proceed through the gospel account, facing problems that arise in the use of the material with each age group and stating purposes for its use. The group will try to determine the periods or age groups at which each passage will probably make its greatest religious contributions. Knowledge of Bible text, of Bible background, and of teaching values are combined in this approach to Bible study. Every teacher in the church school should have an opportunity to enroll in such courses.

Bible Study Essential

This chapter closes with a challenge to parents and teachers to commit themselves to a serious study of the Bible. The Bible has held words of eternal life for every generation. Only the teacher or parent who makes a serious study of the Bible will ever help children to learn much about it. The way to arouse or hold interest is to share it. Children become devoted to the objects of our own loyalties. To try to teach the Bible to children and at the same time neglect intelligent, devotional, and regular study is to attempt the impossible. If teachers or parents really wish to use the Bible with children, studying it themselves is the essential first step in the process.

Questions to Answer

Make a schedule of Bible study for the next two weeks. How will you start your study? What books will you use? What is your special field of interest?

Work out a plan for Bible study for a parent-teacher group meeting on church night.

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The bibliography given below is furnished to guide the making of a schedule and for this study.

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** The writer wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to this book for the happy phrase "Biblical literacy."

CHAPTER V

THE BIBLE AND NURSERY CHILDREN

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

1. Review Chapters II, III.
2. Make a list of any problems you have sensed in the use of the Bible with children under four years of age. Add problems that arise as you restudy the chapters listed in activity 1.

The Use of the Bible With Children Under Four

Perhaps the best way to approach the subject of how to use the Bible with the child under four years of age is to recall the limitations of nursery children and to see what teachers *can* teach them. Then the nursery leader will be able to answer some of the questions that serious parents, eager that their little child be nurtured religiously, often ask regarding the use of the Bible with nursery children. Perhaps then they will be ready to see where the Bible fits into the program of religious nurture for the young child.

The child under four is not yet ready to listen to stories as stories, much less use a book. The so-called story for the nursery child is only one incident told in short sentences, quite briefly, and repeated often. It may take the form of a few sentences explaining a picture. The teacher presupposes that the picture is within the limited experience of a young child. This experience is far more circumscribed than any but trained adults or thoughtful parents ever dream.

Tommy and Jack were cousins and six years old. They were visiting a farm for the first time. They gazed in fascination at a cow. "I told you so, I told you so," exclaimed Tommy. "I told you a cow was bigger than a mouse!" Having seen a picture of cows, just the same size as a picture of a mouse, the cousins had no standard of

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judgment regarding the relative size of the two animals. When we remember that Tommy and Jack were much more advanced than nursery children, had lived even twice as long, we see how simple must be the background that teachers may depend upon in telling stories to nursery children. Magi, shepherds, babies in basket boats smeared with pitch, wicked kings, all are experiences as removed from life and understanding as if they were described in a foreign language. Apply these standards to Bible stories for nursery children and the reader will see how few, if any, Bible stories may be told to them.

The story of the Christmas baby may have meaning if just the incident of mother love and care is stressed, since mother love and care are familiar. Birds and flowers are known. If a "story" of Jesus the man is desired so that nursery children will have a first picture of Jesus as man as well as baby, a simple incident or two of Jesus and the flowers and Jesus and the birds may be used, based on Matthew 6. 26-28. The parable, of course, cannot be introduced in its entirety. Jesus and the children might be told if it could be crowded into one incident, an unfortunate procedure. Indeed, some workers think that this story has lost its real value among Christians because it has been repeated too often to children. It is not used with the adults for whom it holds so ringing a challenge. It seems a pity that the narrative cannot be kept until it can be developed as a perfect and artistic story. Then the child's first picture of Jesus and the children may be unusually lovely. A picture of Jesus and the children¹ may be shown to nursery children and accompanied by a sentence or two as: "Jesus was a kind man. He liked little children and they liked him too." These few Bible incidents may be used again and again throughout the year. The interests of a nursery child are not seasonal. He enjoys repetition.

¹ Possibly "Jesus and the Children" by Tarrant is to be preferred.

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No little child ever learns anything from one telling, *even* though the emotional accompaniment be great.

Clarity in Ideas of God and of Jesus

In speaking of Jesus to nursery children, teachers and parents will never confuse God and Jesus and use the two names interchangeably. Prayers will be addressed to God, not to Jesus. Song prayers addressed to Jesus will be avoided. Adults will seek to clarify their own thinking on concepts of God and Jesus in order not to confuse their little children. They will remember the immaturity of the child mind and introduce no theological statements. Some earnest workers, because of the mental and emotional confusion of children, would withhold any actual naming of God or Jesus to nursery children. But this seems both impossible and fruitless. When children are in a fellowship of Christian people the reality of God and the friendliness of Jesus are as natural a part of the environment as the place itself.

There is one other phase of the problem of Bible stories that must be touched upon. Stories should not be so simplified and changed that they are no longer the original account. This is an irreverent and unnecessary way of using the Bible with young children. The reader may examine the story of Samuel as included in some nursery class materials. This story is about a child, and so many persons are eager to include it in courses for little children. The study will show how a Bible story can be so twisted as no longer to be the story itself.

The Religious Emphasis for the Nursery Child

The nursery teacher and parent will remember that what the nursery child needs most is an environment of love, peace, kindness, purity, and beauty, made so because it is fashioned by persons filled with the spirit of Christ. It is through creating such an environment that they best teach little children religiously. They re-create the gospel

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in life rather than hand it down in words to nursery children.

In addition to the few New Testament incidents, nursery children need picture incidents given in conversational form that interpret their own lives according to the principles of living and philosophy of the New Testament. Of course there will be no attempt to label the point of view as "in the Bible," since the Bible, or any other book, cannot be truly authoritative for so young a child. Yet, who can say that this more subtle method is not the truly creative one for teaching truth? It has good authority for the gospel spread from life to life even more than by word of mouth in apostolic times. It is infinitely easier to tell a "little" Bible story, however confusing and unsuitable, to nursery children, and sing a "little" song, but that method does not constitute genuine teaching for this age group. Eipper, in *Human Children*, tells of how two natives of Tibet, among other greetings, say to each other, "You are exerting yourself." Sometimes we adults "exert" ourselves too zealously in the factual approach to children before such an approach is of any real value to them.

In interpreting daily life religiously, some story incidents will center on teaching children to be self-reliant, as for example, taking off and putting on one's own wraps. Helping children to do for themselves is a procedure far more important for their character growth than thinking or doing for them.

Other incidents will help the young learners to feel at home in the puzzling, often fear-producing, world that they are so eager to explore. A sense of security is necessary to wholesome personality development. The writer recalls two little children who had acquired their mother's panic over storms. Let a storm approach and two wholesome romping children were reduced to objects of pity. The approach to re-education was through play, story incident, and through an example of calm interest in the storm. One evening while dinner was being prepared, it

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was evident that a storm was brewing. I began to recall all our happy experiences in watching a family of robins in a big maple tree outside the window. "How the robins enjoy talking to each other," I said, gaily. "Just listen." The birds were twittering, as they always do at the approach of a storm. "Do you know what they are saying? I think Mrs. Robin is talking to Mr. Robin. She knows a storm is coming. She is saying: 'Dearie, put on your raincoat. Dearie, put on your raincoat. I don't want you to get wet.' " Then followed a simple explanation of how a bird oils its feathers in the rain. The incident was repeated over and over. When the thunder came the children were disturbed, but less in a panic. All summer this incident was repeated. As the children became less terror-stricken we played a game of listening for the thunder and trying to clap with it. We used the poem:

"Hear the thunder rumble, roar,
See the rain just pour and pour!
Dandelions yellow, bright,
Lift their faces in delight;
Johnny-jump-ups, pansies too,
Want another drink or two.

"Lilies-of-the-valley white
Nod their heads in pure delight;
Tulips hold their cups up high
For the raindrops blowing by.
Thunder isn't cross at all,—
It just says the rain will fall."

—ELLA WATERBURY GARDNER.

The mother bravely co-operated and was helped in overcoming her own terror. At the end of the summer our little group was again preparing supper, the children busily cutting out cookies. Suddenly the littlest one looked up into my face with a chuckle. "'Dearie, put on your raincoat,' Mrs. Robin says. 'I believe it is going to rain.'" I knew then that the lesson had been "learned." Then I

²From *The Primary Quarterly*.

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was able to speak of God's love and care for little children and to be sure I was really heard.

Other interpretations of daily life will lend religious meaning to the wonder and credulity of a little child. A three-year-old child at nursery class heard the incident of a little girl finding a crocus in spring. It was spoken of as a "surprise." The leader was seeking to interpret the renewal of life in spring religiously. During the week the child came running to the mother with shining eyes. "I've found a surprise in our own yard," she exclaimed. The mother and child went out to see a lovely lavender hepatica in the wild-flower garden. "And God is sending us surprises," the little girl said in a satisfied voice. The reader can see how much nursery work is home work from these incidents.

The play centers of the nursery class may help the three-year-old to take his first steps away from complete egocentrism and into that regard for others, fundamental to growth in Christian personality. "Taking turns in work and play," sang Joe. "Tommy, do you know what that means? It means I slide on the slide and then you can slide." Not far, but at least Joe's remark denotes progress. He would not monopolize the cherished slide. Free play in the nursery may be interpreted with other child-life pictures and story incidents. Other experiences and materials will help the newcomer to realize what a happy place a church may be.

Bible Story Books

Many parents will say, "But Tom or Nancy or Jean listens when I read such and such a Bible story. They can repeat every word!" This may be quite true. Nursery children, because of their keen desire for fellowship with adults, will listen at home to stories that could not hold their attention in a group of children and told by more or less familiar teachers.

This does not necessarily mean that the children really

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know what the stories are about. Their parents are right. They literally "know every word" and are reveling in them too. In a year or two this mastery will all be gone, since it is a sort of parrot knowledge. Comprehension and understanding do not attend "knowing." Unfortunately, there lingers a sense of the familiar that makes it hard to quicken the child's interest in the book regardless of its excellence.

If the parent or teacher wishes a Bible book for little children, it is better to use some of the excellent ones (see bibliography, next chapter) *after* the child is four. If a simple book is still desired for the three-year-old, a scrapbook may be arranged containing one or two Madonnas, just the detail of mother and child. In connection with these pictures there may be conversation about the way Mary cared for the little baby whose name was Jesus. The scrapbook may contain a copy of "Jesus and the Children," Tarrant, and of "Jesus on the Hillside," Copping. Brief conversation may be used with these two pictures. This is quite enough of a Bible book for a nursery child. It may be homemade. Books of large photographs showing normal child activities will be equally helpful if used with the proper interpretations.

Several years ago I was thrown intimately with two little girls. When the older one was three, I gave her a copy of my own book, *Jesus and the Children*. Her brightness (her IQ at school later proved to be near genius) led me to think she could use it profitably. At first we did not read the text, just had a sentence about each picture in turn. The book was well beloved, but by the time the little girl was old enough for the stories the new had worn off. She listened after she was five to the stories, but largely out of affection for the reader and out of a desire for closer fellowship. Then when the book might have served its purpose splendidly at six, it was put aside. "I've heard it all," she would say.

Now this little girl is almost nine. She is reading the

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stories for herself. "Joan, do you remember how we used to read these stories and look at these pictures?" I asked her the other day. She looked puzzled. "No," she answered. "Did we read them? I knew you gave me the book a long time ago." A little withholding would have accomplished a use of this storybook more in keeping with the purpose of its writing. In other words, adults can be overzealous in introducing children too rapidly to Bible material. This is true with kindergarten and primary children as well as in the nursery. What to withhold is a nicer problem sometimes than what to introduce.

In addition, nursery teachers and parents may, in using too advanced Bible materials, neglect the religious interpretation of the young child's environment that it is their business to give.

Bible Verses

Some parents—and they are the more earnest ones—seem to remember themselves as very little children knowing many Bible verses. Many of these they do not now recall, but that does not matter. Shouldn't children, even nursery children, be taught little verses? When the leader explains that they will have no meaning for a child, they add, "But they will mean so much to them later on in life." This is one of the phases of the problem of Biblical literacy that must be faced, so let us examine it.

According to psychologists, we do not remember knowing things in our early childhood, but the memory of the memory of them relearned many times. So the adult only recalls verses learned in early childhood when they have been relearned many times later on. Bible verses learned when one is very young will have no value later on when they may be meaningful, for they will be forgotten unless the child goes through a constant process of relearning.

Even a language that is one's mother tongue will be

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forgotten if it is not spoken constantly until after one is ten. A little boy six and one half years of age and of Greek parentage spoke beautiful English. He went with his mother for one and one half years to Greece. While in Europe he spoke no English. When he returned, I asked him how he enjoyed his trip. "He doesn't understand you," the mother said. "He has to learn English all over again." This is one example of the rapidity with which children forget words even when they are meaningful. The children of missionaries who have grown to adulthood have corroborated this incident from their own experience on several occasions when the writer has spoken of it. Constant use and reuse is necessary. So one learning for the future is impossible.

If Bible verses have to be learned and relearned, they might as well be taught when they are meaningful and can be used as guides to conduct, in worship, or to aid aesthetic expression. Nothing is more wasteful of time than trying to use Bible drill with children under eight. With children under six, none should be used, though beginners may make their first acquaintance with Bible verses by hearing them repeated often and by associating them with meaningful experiences. It is a great temptation to parents to teach children two and three years old all sorts of rhymes and verses. Really, these little children seem to be able to repeat anything they can pronounce. One little girl of three knew the entire *A Child's Garden of Verses*. But this is absorption with syllabic rhythm, and comprehension of word meaning is not connected with it.

The reader may have noticed how a child of four will begin to think of the meaning of some familiar rhyme and immediately with the attempt to understand will come inability to chant. This fascination with sound of words may make a young child seem irreverent because he experiments with them, and his associations are so limited that irreverence for him is impossible. One mother reported that her boy who had enjoyed the song beginning "Little

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Baby Jesus slept on his bed of hay" at church school came downstairs singing lustily, "Literary Digest slept on his bed of hay." He saw no incongruity in his song.

Sometimes a nursery child may listen absorbed on Christmas Eve as mother or father reads the Nativity story. The older children gather close. The red candle flickers yellow in the window. There is a delicious commingling of the fragrance of evergreen and of festal cookery. The little child is carried away. By the meaning of the words? No. By their rhythmic beat, by the sense of security that home spells, by the joy in sense experience, flickering light, good and pleasant aromas, by fellowship with parents and older brothers and sisters. Again the gospel is made evident, not through words, but through persons and the environment they create. The very sense of bigness of the beyond calls to the child's spirit and causes it to stretch and grow.

A little neighbor of three came into my living room one evening at twilight. "Play about Christmas for me," she requested and stretched herself out on the sofa. I tried "Away in a Manger," "Little Baby Jesus," to no avail. Then I chanced "Silent Night." "Play it again," she said in a satisfied, dreamy voice. "It is my most favorite." "It is about the baby Jesus and his mother," I said. "I know it," she replied. I did not sing the hymn nor go on any further with the story.

To Summarize

Do not try to tell Bible *stories* in the nursery class. The story for the nursery child is an incident. Two or three Bible incidents, all from the New Testament, may be used in the nursery as conversational sentences about pictures.

Use incidents that interpret the child's daily life from the Christian point of view. Seek to create in home and church an environment that is quiet, trustful and trustworthy, worshipful, happy, and that offers opportunities to grow gradually in social adjustments (especially in

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happy play). The parent or the teacher must be a thorough Bible scholar to know how to use such incidents and to create such an environment. They must be consecrated growing Christians. This is the difficult, not the easy, way of nurturing little children religiously. For the child's sake the adult will often overcome an intellectual impatience to attune himself to such a method.

Bible storybooks are best withheld until the kindergarten age is reached. A large-sized scrapbook with two or three good and suitable pictures about which conversations may be held may be the child's first Bible book.

Questions

Write a nursery "story" interpreting religiously one of the following experiences of three-year-old children:

Getting dressed.

Going to the store.

Watching for daddy to come home.

Hearing a robin sing in early spring.

Finding a spring flower.

Being hungry.

Going to church.

Overcoming fear of a dog.

For Further Study

Nursery Class Teaching, Lloyd, Mary Edna. The Methodist Book Concern.

Guiding Nursery Children, McCallum, Eva B. The Bethany Press.

Child Life and Religion, Forest, Ilse. Harper & Bros.

God and the Little Child, Spalding, Elsie L. National Sunday School Union.

An Introduction to Child Study, Strang, Ruth May. Nursery Section. The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIBLE FOR THE KINDERGARTEN AGE

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

1. Reread Chapter V.
2. Watch a beginners child for half an hour. Make a list of everything he does during that time. Make a list of all the questions he asks. Analyze these questions. How many of them seem to reflect a seeking for causes and effects, for meaning in life?

Children four and five years of age are enrolled in the kindergarten of the church school. The psychological approaches to the use of the Bible discussed in the preceding chapter, "The Bible and Nursery Children," continue to hold true for this age group. Let us see what additional characteristics may be noted indicating ways that the child has developed. The use of the Bible should keep pace with his development.

Looking for Meanings

Kindergarten children are in the habit of asking questions that no philosopher could answer, for they seek the meanings of life. "Why? What makes it go? Why are you my mother?" and twenty-five other questions, one four-year-old asked in a half hour one day. Not all of the four- and five-year-old's questions are thoughtful. Some are chatter for social purpose just as are the similar questions of adults. The adult turns the child's question back to him and only answers it when it is thoughtful and he needs help that he cannot secure in any other way.

Religious teaching in the kindergarten period should seek to give a Christian interpretation of life. Experiences may be planned to help children to understand this world as governed by the laws of a kindly, caring God. A window box in one kindergarten was planted with nasturtium

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seed. The children were led to wonder and to worship about the gift of life as they sang "O Who Can Make a Flower."¹ Another kindergarten group brought fruit for an orphanage. They took it to the home and played with the children. They sang,

"On Thanksgiving day, on Thanksgiving day,
If you want to be happy, give something away."

"And God meant that children be happy together," the teacher remarked quietly. The kindergarten children should feel an outreach of spirit toward God and sense him as reality in the universe. So their wonder and credulity may gradually become worship. A kindergarten group sang joyfully, "We give thanks unto thee, O God," again and again as they were busy about their plans for sharing winter comforts. Many of their ideas of God will be crude because their range of thought is limited. The teacher, however, should be careful to avoid continuing this immaturity by using unsuitable Biblical material. The child lives in a small world, a world largely of home and neighborhood, play and sensory experience. He is trying to master his world, to understand why things are as they are. He is trying to experiment to see how the world runs. Sometimes the questions he asks lead adults to judge that he can understand far beyond his ability. Their explanations go so deeply into a problem that they confuse rather than help him.

The child of four and five years has no historical sense, no time sense, nor any sense of distance. China may be as near as grandmother's back yard, and grandmother living in the next city block. He has little memory, and that comes and goes in flashes. Parrot form of memorizing disappears during the period as desire for meanings and mastery of word forms grow. The kindergarten child remembers primarily those words and events that are asso-

¹ Shields, *Worship and Conduct Songs*.

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ciated with sensory experiences and with emotions, pleasant or fearful. One kindergarten group in a vacation school visited the church sanctuary. They enjoyed the friendliness of the organist as she played softly their favorite song. The leader then noticed several children holding their hands in the stream of sunlight stained red as it passed through a memorial window. There was pure joy on their faces. She suggested that as the organist played the group might enjoy moving fingers in the rays, blue, green, yellow, red. "I do like this church," Eleanor confided later in the session. The leader asked herself whether the joyous sensory experience with the colors might not be primarily responsible for the response.

The kindergarten child does not read and write, nor does he think often in logical fashion. Many of his responses are spontaneous. He learns meanings in terms of experience. He still has ability to repeat a great deal of material, none of which has any meaning. Almost all of this will be forgotten as rapidly as he comes to think of it meaningfully. While his mind is as eager for experiences as his little investigating body, it is just as immature as this same small body.

Ability to Listen to Stories

The child is now able to listen with pleasure to a real story, although it must be simple in structure and short in length, not over five hundred words. Usually a rhythmic quality adds to its value, as for example, when a sentence is repeated or a Bible verse is used as a refrain. He loves to imitate the storyteller's movements of hand as she may illustrate a part of the sequence. Such a story can be developed according to the standards for the structure of any story, a beginning that arouses and centers interest, a sequence of events leading to a climax, a conclusion that satisfies.

The Bible story should be as beautifully told as possible so that the children may truly enjoy it. Kindergarten chil-

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dren can lose themselves in a Bible story. Once a teacher was telling how the four men brought the paralytic to Jesus. They had just found the house where the throngs crowded about Jesus. "How could they ever get their friend near to Jesus?" the teacher asked. "Then they thought of a good way." One little child came over and patted the teacher's knee, his face shining with gladness. Stories should be told vividly but not too vividly. The writer recalls telling in a kindergarten the story of Jesus and the blind man. She tried to make the man's need vivid and said: "He had never seen a beautiful red rose. He had never seen a pretty bird flying from tree to tree. He had never even seen his own dear mother's face." The distress on her hearers' faces made her realize that the emotional strain was becoming too great to be healthful.

Children of this age are also capable of listening to stories told to a group. These are distinct advances over the abilities of nursery children and make it possible for certain Bible stories to have value for the kindergarten group.

Teachers have overestimated these growing abilities by thinking that young children could understand many Bible stories no matter how foreign in background and thought form they were. Just because an ability to listen to Bible stories is developing, there is no reason for thinking that the children can listen to almost any simplified Bible story. Stories that presuppose an historical background or understanding of ideas of time and space should be avoided. In addition, any story that touches the realms of symbolic, mystical teaching should be reserved for a later period. The story of the boy Samuel in the temple hearing the voice of God has been used with young children so long that it has almost become a traditional favorite. A young child is unable to understand mystical experiences because he is completely literal minded. He often listens for a magical voice. Definite harm is done to his growing religious life, for later on he must outgrow this immature understanding

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of the Bible story. We know that this later rethinking sometimes does not occur.

The vocabulary of the kindergarten child is limited by his immaturity of experience and the narrowness of his world. Many Bible stories describe a life so different from his own that any real understanding is impossible. A vague, confused idea with many accompanying grotesque conceptions is the result. Teachers may tell simple versions of Bible stories only to find that they are anything but simple to children. We blunt the child's ability to think and his zest to learn by such a practice.

Stories should be carefully chosen for the picture of God that they present. Most of the stories from the Old Testament are unsuitable for kindergarten children for this reason. Unless the Old Testament story is viewed through the teachings of the Gospels, it is likely to set up ideas and conduct patterns that are not Christian. The child has to outgrow many of them in order that he may come into fellowship with a Christian God. Only those pictures of God in the Old Testament that show him as loving and caring and merciful should be told to young children. We are rapidly outgrowing our practice of telling the early Genesis stories to young children.²

Bible stories for the kindergarten should be chosen from the New Testament, especially from the Gospels. However, this principle presents a problem also. The child does not inherit a love, devotion and pleasant association with Jesus. He is likely to become impatient at hearing too many stories even about Jesus. We can be sure that only that method of Bible teaching that leaves children willing to continue their study of the Bible is a fortunate approach to it. One little boy returned from church-school kindergarten and said to his mother, "I am not going any more. They talk about Jesus all the time. They talked about him when I wore my green suit, they talked about

² See Chapter I for discussion.

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him when I wore my blue suit, they talked about him when I wore my white suit, and now I know all about Jesus."

A different Bible story should not be told every Sunday, of course. There are not enough Bible stories suitable for beginners children to make this practice profitable or helpful. No child really learns by hearing a story once. With the best intentions, no teacher is skillful enough to teach children any more rapidly than they are capable of learning. Nor can she truly teach material that they are not yet mature enough to understand. The teacher must bow before the limitations of the group for whom she is responsible. Fortunately, the kindergarten child loves recall of the familiar, for thus he has time really to learn.

Teachers will remember their major purposes for the kindergarten years. Children are to learn to live together in Christian fellowship and to show interest in others in ways that are Christian. They will keep in mind, of course, that during these years there will be only an introduction to such fellowship and to such service because of the age and limited ability of the child. They will tell stories when the stories help to contribute to this ongoing experience. When a story is valuable enough to be told, it can be recalled profitably and often by both teacher and pupil. The child can take time to live out its teachings. Certain modern life stories will be told that show the same spirit of fellowship and of service at work today. They will show it at work in the child's own world, through the helpfulness of children and of adult workers, the wonder of the seasons, the play life of children, for example. Quantity of material is no test of a successful and helpful use of the Bible with young children.

Dramatization

The kindergarten child may dramatize spontaneously familiar Bible stories. The group may take turns playing the different parts. If stories of Jesus are dramatized, a reader tells about the part of Jesus. It is not played by a

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child. Repetition adds to the value of dramatization. Parts are not studied and properties are unnecessary. The dramatization will often begin spontaneously during the retelling of a well-known story. Once the writer started to retell the story of Elisha and the widow of Shunem in a kindergarten. When she came to the building of the little room, her group suddenly turned into Syrian carpenters and the story was spontaneously dramatized from that point.

Drawing

Four- and five-year-olds enjoy making pictures to illustrate well-known stories and should have plenty of opportunity for this activity. They may use large sheets of unprinted newspaper or of manila wrapping paper and jumbo-size crayons. The event in the story most important to the child is sure to loom largest in his drawing.

Watching for Teaching Opportunities

The teacher may be on the watch for opportunities to connect Bible story with life. Once the writer had just told the story of the little Jesus in Joseph's shop. She had described how he may have tidied the shop by gathering the shavings. Donald launched on a long story of a carpenter who had recently repaired the front steps to his porch. Just then the sexton passed through the corridor with a hammer in hand. He was on his way to the workroom in the church basement to repair a table. The children saw him. "May we go to watch him?" the children asked. "You might ask him," the teacher replied. As is so often the case, the sexton met the children more than half way. "Of course, you can come," he replied, heartily. There were shavings on the floor. "We'll pick them up for you," the children volunteered and went to work. The teacher explained about the story. "Would you like to take some home to play with?" the sexton asked, to the children's obvious delight. The leader told how she used to

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make curls behind her ears with shavings when she was a little girl. "Maybe Jesus did too," suggested Mildred. "Well, he might have," the sexton said. The group sang "The Little Jesus"³ and went back to their room with shaving curls behind their ears.

When the Story is Helpful

Many of the teachings of the Bible for kindergarten children are not found in stories. They must be lived out by the group, especially in play and service, or seen in modern-life stories. All story material will be used with discretion. Unless a story is connected with living and feeling, the child may use the story as a substitute for living the desirable experience. Just as a man at a baseball game can take exercise vicariously by watching the players, so children can form the habit of getting the emotional thrill by listening to stories that should come only in connection with worth-while achievements in Christian living. The story can hinder the growth of Christian character if it is used merely as a method of presenting facts and not as an aid in solving problems, furnishing dynamic for a more worth-while life, or guiding the wonderings and the worship life of children.⁴

Bible-Story Books

Bible-story books are interesting to kindergarten children. They like the picture storybook type, that is, for every page of text a page of illustration. The story should be carefully selected and the illustrations accurate. The method of illustration should fit in with the text and style of retelling. The color work should be governed by the type of drawing. If modern posterlike drawings are used, the poster type of coloring, use of simple primary colors, is to be desired. If masterpieces are chosen, the

³ Baker, *Songs for the Little Child*.

⁴ See Hartshorne, *Character in Human Relations*, page 13.

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lovely soft colors of the original should be reproduced as nearly as possible. The form of art and the type of color may unite in an artistic whole. Bible-story books are recommended at the end of this chapter.

Little Child's Memory

We have discussed memorization of material for young children in the preceding chapter (see page 69). We have shown that memorization before nine years of age is largely a wasteful process. This does not mean that devotional materials will not be introduced. They are very valuable when used in worshipful ways. The use of the verse, "Then shall the trees of the wood sing for joy," in the spring story in *The Little Child and the Heavenly Father*, Part 6, page 142, is one beautiful example of this devotional use. Teaching a "memory" verse every Sunday for kindergarten children is a waste of time. Picking up verses from hearing them used and reused in the midst of the life of the group is valuable, for so they have meaning. If the child continues to use these verses throughout the first three or four grades, they are likely to become his permanent possessions.

Ideas of God and of Jesus

One problem of our kindergarten children may be confusion of the God and the Jesus concepts. Jesus should be presented historically to the kindergarten child. Prayers will be addressed to God, not to Jesus. The names should never be used interchangeably by the teacher. A great deal of confusion of thought and of attitude in worship has been wrought for children too young to begin to understand the Trinity by the carelessness of adults. No kindergarten child is able to understand what Christians mean by the presence of the living Christ. Until he is able to come into the experience of the living Christ his teachers will hold to that picture of Jesus that shows him as a friendly, helpful, brave Person. They will say: "We find

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stories of him in the Bible. We find stories about what he told about God in the Bible. We like to think of him because he was so friendly and helpful and because he liked and cared for people."

In telling stories of Jesus' miracles the emphasis should never be on the miracle, but on the friendly helpfulness and courage of Jesus.

The first approach to Jesus should be as a man. Before the teacher tells the story of the Baby who came at Christmas, it is well for the children to have a picture of the Friend who was so strong and gentle. Christmas takes on truer meaning when placed in the setting of the ministry and teachings of Jesus.

Avoid Arousing Fears

Teachers will avoid with kindergarten children the use of all fear-producing materials. The story of the crucifixion or of the resurrection will never be told to them. If any genuine interest in or affection for Jesus has begun, the stories of the crucifixion and the resurrection come as a distinct shock, especially to the sensitive child. The unpleasant emotional associations may linger long after the story itself is forgotten.

The writer has faced this problem with a number of mothers whose children happened upon a picture of the crucifixion and she has come to realize how cruelly shocked the imaginative child usually is by such a picture. The only way to help the child is to shift his attention as rapidly as possible, but this method does not fully overcome the first impression. A feeling of revulsion becomes associated with Jesus rather than with the event, and irreparable harm has been done to the growing religious life of some children. The fact that the child cannot trace the development of such an attitude to its source makes it more powerful of influence.

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Bible Pictures

Of course teachers will show little children no fear-producing Bible pictures. Bible pictures will be accurate in background and simple of detail. The preference for color develops rapidly, beginning with the kindergarten age. Pictures will be touched by the children and viewed unhurriedly. In a vacation church school the children crowded about the writer who held a picture of the home of the ants. The study was about how God gives homes for all. "Let me see it. Let me see it," was the request. Each child in turn, took the picture, held it, sometimes touched its details with a finger. Seeing meant touching and holding as well as looking. Only a few pictures will be in evidence at a time. There will be repetition of use with new associations accompanying recall. Kindergarten children especially enjoy the picture of Jesus and the children. A copy may be chosen as a permanent picture for the room.

Care in Interpretation

Teachers will be careful, of course, not to misinterpret Bible stories in an attempt to simplify Biblical material and make it suitable for the children for whom it was never really intended. For example, the story of Samuel left in the church by his mother has proved a fear-producing story for many a timid kindergarten child. He is unable to understand the custom and the significance of Hannah's dedication of her first-born to the Lord, and thinks only of being separated from his own mother with horror. In order to "tone down" this element and still use the story, it has been rewritten until it is quite another story.

Teachers no longer tell to young children the story of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac. This narrative probably was meant to combat human sacrifice. Under the doorways of many Canaanite homes, among whose villages the Hebrews made their own homes and whose religious ideas had powerful influence on them, the skeletons of babies

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have been found over and over again. Probably, the rite of human sacrifice was used to appease the god and win security for the house. Old Testament times had no such attitude to children as Jesus taught. The story of Abraham and Isaac cries out against such a practice, but no young child can understand this. Fortunately, most teachers have gotten far enough along in their understanding of child life to avoid so unwise a selection of Biblical material.

To twist a Bible story out of its context just to simplify it is unfortunate in the writer's judgment. For example, to use Jesus' parable of the sower as background material for a picture of outdoor Syrian life is legitimate. To tell the story itself minus any symbolic element and plus many family incidents is not justifiable. It may lead to serious trouble when the older boy or girl begins to read for himself.

Approach Children Psychologically

No connected use of series of Biblical materials such as a life of Joseph or of Jesus will be attempted with kindergarten children, for they do not think logically and with continuity. They must be taught through activity. What is known as the psychological approach is used; that is, teaching is set up in terms of the child's interest, needs, and experiences. Just as in the case of nursery children, the Bible is used wisely with children of four and five years when most of the Biblical narratives are withheld for school children and adolescents. The spirit of the Bible is introduced into the group living and dominates choices of materials that are more understandable by young children.

There are no Old Testament stories that are so simple and close to modern daily life that they are of great value for this age group. The story of the little room on the roof that the woman of Shunem built for Elisha comes nearest to being a suitable one. Such stories as gifts to the tabernacle, the baby Moses, Rebecca and a stranger, Ruth

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and Naomi, David taking care of the sheep for his father are not harmful for kindergarten children. On the other hand, they are much more suitable for children of school age. When they appear in courses of study for kindergarten children, they have been introduced largely to meet the demand for quantity of Biblical material so far as it can be met without sacrificing the child. It is possible to use with kindergarten children stories based on Old Testament backgrounds.⁵

Teachers may select stories from the New Testament that show Jesus' friendly helpfulness, his kindness, his interest in people and his love of God. The stories that he told to interpret God may better be left for the school age. The Nativity stories may be told simply.

It is hard indeed for any adult to throw off the thought forms that are still prevalent due to the educational theories of the past. Some readers may be concerned over the suggestion of how little Biblical material is suitable for pre-school children. Helping children to practice, to enjoy and to ponder over what they do hear is more important than introducing many passages. Then, too, when parents and teachers recall that the environment in the home, community, and church is the real teacher of the child, and that persons and their religious experience are parts of this environment, they begin to see how the religious life of young children may be nurtured.

To Summarize

We may say again that the religious life of children is not nurtured fundamentally through the recounting of adventures in narrative form, but through opportunities to live in Christlike ways in play, in service, in worship so far as the child is capable of living thus. It is nurtured through the contagious influence of the personalities of

⁵ For example, see the little book, *Isaac of the Tents*, and the story by Esther Freivogel in *Beginners Stories*, Part 4, entitled "The Little Isaac."

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parents and teacher. Words avail little and cannot be relied on as the only method of teaching the Bible. The influence of mature Christian personalities and opportunity for living Bible truths are essential. The child going from kindergarten to first grade should begin to think of the Bible as the book that tells about Jesus and that has other enjoyable stories. This is quite enough of a dawning knowledge of the Bible as a book.

Questions (choose one question)

1. Make a list of all Bible stories used in the course of material that you are teaching or that your child is studying. Read the stories carefully. How many are from the Old Testament? How many from the New Testament? Are there elements in these stories that you think it impossible for young children to understand? Are they historical elements? What ideas of God do these stories reflect? Are they ideas of God that are in keeping with Jesus' teachings? Are they simple enough for young children to understand?

2. Study the songs. Do any of the songs about Jesus tend to confuse the child's ideas of God and of Jesus?

3. If you are a teacher, how would you explain to a parent the seeming lack of use of Biblical material in your department? If you are a parent, how could you explain to a church-school teacher the point of view stated by this chapter regarding the use of the Bible in the kindergarten?

For Further Study

Psychology and Religion in Early Childhood, Smith, J. W. D. Student Christian Movement Press.

The Child's Approach to Religion, Fox, H. W. Harper & Bros.

God and the Little Child, Spalding, Elsie L. National Sunday School Union.

What Is Religious Education? Myers, A. J. W. National Sunday School Union.

Experiences in the Church School Kindergarten, Moore, Jessie E., Chap. XI. The Pilgrim Press.

Bible Story Books for Kindergarten Children.

Bible Books for Small People, Entwistle, Chalmers and Wood:

Isaac of the Tents.

The Song the Shepherds Heard.

The Star of the King.

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First Bible Stories, Moore, Jessie E. Thomas Nelson & Sons.
This book is the only recommended Old Testament story book.
It is recommended only if the reader feels there must be Bible stories from the Old Testament for young children.

Jesus and the Children, Smither, Ethel L. Thomas Nelson & Sons.

CHAPTER VII

THE BIBLE IN THE FIRST THREE GRADES

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

Consult with a public-school teacher of the first, second, or third grade. Ask to see reading material for primary children. Note the size of the type, the length of the sentences and paragraphs, the width of the margins, the difficulty and type of the words, the length of the stories. Ask teachers, What stories are told to the children? How much more developed in vocabulary, length, and paragraph structure are the told stories than those the children read for themselves? Make a list of the contents of these stories. What are they about? How wide a knowledge and experience of life do they reflect? Ask the teachers to explain to you what is meant by the social sciences and what are the subjects of study in this field for first-, second-, and third-grade children.

Reorganization of Grouping

We come now to children who are attending public school. It has been the practice in the church school to group the first three grades together into a Primary Department. There is a growing judgment that the third grade marks such a transition period that first and third grade should not be combined in one group even for worship. A better subdivision probably places first- and second-grade children together when the size of the group and the equipment warrants. Then the third and fourth grades will form a second group, and the fifth and sixth grades a third.

When a child becomes eight years of age, his mastery of reading and his ability to think have progressed to the point where a different type of teaching and a different use of materials are possible. One psychologist has said that he is passing from the trial-and-error method of thinking where he learns largely through experimentation with people, objects, and elements in his environment to the

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dawn of ability to think abstractly. We must keep in mind the rapid growth and development of children during these three years.

Characteristics of Primary Children

The primary grades mark a transition. Going to school places the child in a new world. Prior to this the home, church, and the immediate neighborhood represent the world for most children in the United States. Only about twenty per cent of American children have kindergarten experience. Except to a limited degree, the church school is the only agency outside of the home that works with the nursery child. This is not discounting the splendid pioneer educational work of preschool experts, nor does it indicate a lack of a sense of indebtedness to these workers for their contributions to childhood education. The primary age, for most children, is the time at which the step into the broader world is taken. Tasks are set for this child, requirements must be met, and a time schedule must be observed. Regardless of how flexible and informal the program of the public school is, the first grade presents a staggering new situation. The child reacts to it in a number of ways. The many epidemics of contagious diseases that sweep through the first grade are due not only to increased exposure to infections, but also to the fact that children are emotionally upset because they feel insecure and uncertain. They react mentally to the problem of tasks and of learning to read with certain mental setbacks.

The kindergarten child begins to sense all sorts of philosophical problems. The primary child in the first and second grades is having a hard time remastering his environment. There are times when his questions show that, under the surface, the quest for knowledge is still going on, but for the most part there is a distinct slowing down during the first two years and a desire to live in a world of everyday things. There are certain glandular changes also that contribute to this difficulty. The chil-

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dren are still sensory and literal minded. They do not yet think clearly in terms of relationships, nor can they organize their thinking. Some primary workers make the mistake of taking the occasional searching question as an indication of general mental outreach. Other primary workers who teach third grade along with the first and the second pitch the rate of understanding at the third-grade level. Still others base their teaching and their judgment of children's abilities on the reactions of gifted children.

If the child in the first or second grade is to be helped through the use of the Bible, he will need to have it taught in connection with a poised, active, largely unemotional program. He will be given many chances to choose in order to do, and abstract approaches will be avoided. The teaching of the Bible will be connected with the child's real life and needs, not added as an artificial accretion to experience. Symbolic teaching is of no value to primary children, even those in the third grade being unable to understand the truth behind the symbol.

The Bible Story

Telling Bible stories is the method too generally emphasized with primaries. Stories may be longer and have more detailed background than those for children in the kindergarten. They may be 750 to 900 words in length. Certain Old Testament stories that depict interesting pictures of life and customs and of worship may now be told, especially to groups in the second and third grades. These stories should still be tested to be sure that they reflect teachings about God that are similar to those revealed in the New Testament. What has been said about the Old Testament's influence upon the kindergarten child's ideas of God still holds true during the primary period and for the same reasons.

Long discussions of God as a Spirit are more confusing than helpful for children in the first three grades. When children speak in such terms, they are usually repeating

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adult teaching rather than revealing any real comprehension. Primary children think of ghost or fairy when the word "spirit" is used. Associating spiritual qualities with God's personality is a better approach than the abstract statement, "God is a Spirit." The same rule holds true about the statement, "God is love." It is better to say, "God puts it into our minds to be loving. God does loving things."

Many older primary children do begin to struggle with such problems as: "How can God be everywhere?" One primary child wished to know what kind of aeroplane God used to be everywhere. "Why should God watch me and not watch other children?" a bright little eight-year-old girl asked. "Why shouldn't he watch Chinese children as much as me? How could he watch us all at the same time? My mother says he sees everything I do, but I don't believe it." "How can God hear us?" "What does God look like?" are other questions. When children raise such questions, help should be given so that they may think them through to the best of their ability. The interpretation of God should be just as spiritual as one as the child is capable of understanding. There is a great difference between meeting children's problems as they raise them and introducing problems to children before they are ready for an adequate discussion.

The primary teacher, however, will not confine herself to so narrow a use of the Bible with children as the telling of Bible stories.

How a Primary Child Masters an Idea

The child may connect the desirable activity or worshipful experience reflected in the Bible story with life today. A teaching unit should contain both Bible stories and stories that give pictures of life today. Both types of stories will be ineffective in guiding life unless the parent or teacher furnishes opportunities to parallel in the child's own activities the incidents, conduct and emotional patterns

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described in the stories. The quantity of Biblical material is not the essential test of a good religious course for primary children. The test is how thoroughly does the course plan that the child work into his thinking, feeling, and doing the desirable behavior and attitude patterns?

Many of the principles of the Christian religion essential to the primary child's growth are not set forth in narrative form in the Bible. These are to be learned in connection with activities and discussion, poem and song material. The child lives the Bible teaching before he can consciously name it from the Bible. He sees the principle working out in modern life stories. Before he can definitely understand a principle, the child takes it in and works it out. For young children labeling activities and "applying the truth" is not so important as starting with purposeful activity and gradually coming to an understanding of the Bible principle.

Teachers will continue to look for opportunities to connect Bible narratives with life today. One summer Sunday the superintendent of a local hospital called Bethesda was supplying for the pastor. The primary children were making booklets of familiar stories of Jesus to send to an Indian school. They were retelling the stories that they included. One little girl said that the good Samaritan took the sick man to a hospital. "I thought it was to a hotel," a boy remarked. The leader told about Oriental khans and showed a picture. She told how Jesus' tenderness and concern for the sick really was the motive power back of hospitals and of how countries that knew nothing of Jesus still did not have them. Then she showed the picture, "Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda," by Copping. The group recalled the story. The leader said that Bethesda meant "House of Healing." "We've got a hospital in town named that," one boy added. "Our church helps to pay for it," a group leader contributed. The superintendent of the hospital was invited into the group and told of how the hospital had cared for a little baby who had been accidentally injured. "We are trying to be just as thoughtful of sick

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people as Jesus was," the leader said. "I'm going to get my daddy to drive by that hospital," Tom remarked, an idea that the other children seized upon.

Use of the Bible Itself

Let us see what are some of the other uses of the Bible for primary children. Remember one principle¹ is to help children increasingly to stand on their own feet in Bible study. The children should learn to refer to the Bible itself. From the second grade on they can hunt at home, with the parents' help, for Bible verses that tie in with the activities of the teaching unit under way and that lend religious meaning to it. One group followed this plan most successfully in connection with a unit that centered on dependability in the world as seen in the rhythm of the seasons. The parents became interested in this search for suitable Bible verses and the children finally brought the search to a climax in a beautiful worship experience.

It is good practice for the teacher to read from the Bible to children from the first grade. In fact, kindergarten children should have the teacher use the Bible itself. It would be helpful if Bibles were not always bound in black so far as the children are concerned. From the second grade the children can begin to select from the various translations of the Bible the one they prefer to use in connection with certain experiences. For example, a third grade who were interested in a unit in connection with a Community Chest drive desired to memorize the Golden Rule. The teacher brought the Moffatt, Goodspeed, King James, and the American Standard translations of Matthew 7. 12 and asked the children to make their own choice of the version to be memorized. The group chose the Moffatt translation. Even children in the second grade can begin to choose between the translations in a simple way.

Children in third grade sometimes enjoy hearing narra-

¹ See Chap. II.

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tive stories from the Bible itself. One of the writer's most satisfying experiences with a third grade came by reading the story of Joseph. She had carefully selected from the various chapters of Genesis verses that gave a vivid but not too expanded a picture of this great Bible character. Bible stories that have become quite familiar become interesting again to the children when they hear the exact Biblical account. For example, the Nativity stories in Matthew and Luke are fairly familiar to primary children. They take on new value and meaning when the child hears the stories read from the Bible or reads them himself. It is well in telling the story of the good Samaritan sometimes to explain to the children, especially those in the second and third grade, how you have expanded it and why. Then the story in Luke 10. 30-37 can be read and the two accounts contrasted. The primary age must be safeguarded from the negative results of thoughtless expansion of Bible stories. When the child begins to read, he must be helped to understand why teachers have expanded stories and to begin to hear Bible stories in their original form.

The Bible as a Book

Since a primary child is beginning to read, he is interested in the Bible as a book. Because of this growing ability, and the character of the work in the fourth grade, the church should see that every child leaving the third grade is furnished with a Bible. The presenting of this Bible to the child is of importance. It should mark one of the high points of his church-school experience. The Bible may be presented by the minister in a worship service in the sanctuary with the parents in attendance. It might be well for these Bibles to be given at a morning church service, and worship and sermon center around the presentation. Such a service would lend meaning and value to the Bible. This practice could be made of as much significance in the child's church life as joining church should be and usually

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is not. There may be a simple unit of work in late third grade that gives the children an introduction to the Bible as a book. It is a fine connecting unit between the work of the third grade and that of the fourth grade.

In selecting the Bible for a child, many problems arise. The first is the version. Undoubtedly a modern translation of the Bible is more suitable for the child, yet there is no modern translation that is adapted to a child in point of view, in type, marginal set-up, and so on. Probably the best choice, at present, is the American Standard Version because of its accuracy. We need a child's Bible that is a Bible, not selections from the Bible. It should be an excellent modern translation and suitable in format for children; that is, it should be printed in at least twelve-point type with wide margins and broken paragraphs. It should not be too expensive. This is setting an almost impossible task for translator and publisher, but it is an urgently needed service for childhood. Perhaps it would have to be printed in two volumes to avoid bulkiness. Sherman and Kent's *The Children's Bible* probably furnishes the best selections from the Bible for third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade children that we can find at present, but it leaves much to be desired.

Stories of Children

Stories of other children are always of interest. A mother relates how she told the story of the little King Joash, how he was hidden from his wicked grandmother and of his coronation. Her eight-year-old son was delighted with the story and surprised to learn its source. "Are there any more like it in the Bible?" he asked.

Devotional Use

The Bible should be used in devotional ways with primary children. Phrases may be set to music and sung as responses in worship services. They may be connected with vivid and happy group experiences. They may lend signifi-

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cance and value to both individual and group life. Such a Bible verse as "The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord," can be connected with many experiences of primary children in church school or in the home and can lend beauty to them.

Memory Work

Any Bible verses used as memory material must be used over and over and over again if the child is not to forget them. When Bible material is memorized, it should be for a purpose, and there should be chances for its use and its reuse. It is not enough just to teach children to repeat a Bible passage once. Experience has proved that unless they are helped to use it and see its connection with life they will not continue to remember it. Primary children are not yet able to retain permanently what they memorize. Association must go on into the junior age if the memorized verses are to have permanent value and be permanent possessions. Primary children do not need so much memory material as they need memory material carefully selected and frequently recalled.

Conduct Verses

Primary teachers are in a period of transition just now about the use of the so-called conduct verses from the Bible. These verses have been so misused in the past that there is a normal revulsion against their teaching. This statement does not imply that teachers do not wish children to think of the Bible as revealing the will of God. It indicates that they realize there is necessary rethinking of how to present Bible material to children so that they will recognize it as the will of God and accept its guidance. Probably the so-called conduct verses, such as "Even a child is known by what he does," are valuable to children when they can be used to stimulate the child's own discoveries of standards and result in his own judgments and

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choices of ways to act. This is building up inner control of conduct. A glib and thoughtless repetition of these verses is to be avoided. They are harmful, of course, when they supply the teacher or the mother with a sort of stick to hold over the child in order to secure good conduct.

This suggestion holds true also regarding Bible stories that are used to stimulate right conduct. In many cases the connection is too far-fetched to suggest a pattern of behavior, or the story has to be misinterpreted to make it picture the desired behavior pattern. Probably the best approach to the conduct problems of primary children is meeting them as they arise in the group and solving them in natural ways, not through the teaching of Bible verses didactically or the telling of Bible stories. Whether the adult can count on the sanctions that once were associated with Bible verses and stories to motivate desired conduct or not, he knows that there have been negative reactions to such former uses of the Bible with children.

Units on Bible Backgrounds

More emphasis may be placed on an understanding of backgrounds of the Bible in the first, second, and third grade than has been used in the past. Children in their social sciences in the public school are studying home life, including food, shelter, occupation, transportation, and so on. Units that give children similar background for Biblical life should be included in the primary course. One unit may develop tent life among the Hebrews. Home life at the time of Jesus may be the central emphasis in another unit. A discovery of out-of-door experiences in Palestine with all their nature and occupational interests will give a vivid sense of reality to Bible stories. Peepshows of Oriental houses, "movies" of Oriental life, and villages and tent homes may be made. Primary workers are only making a beginning in this use of the Bible with primary children.

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Bible-Story Books

The Bible-story book has increasing value both for enjoyment and for reference. It may be available on reading tables for consultation in the development of activities. Bible-story books should be graded to the interests and reading abilities of children. They should be adequately illustrated. They should never be preachy or unreal. For example, there is one beautifully illustrated book on the Lord's Prayer that is so preachy and insincere in its interpretation of children's religious life that it cannot be recommended. It portrays the religious experiences that adults sometimes sentimentally think children have rather than the honest religious experiences of children.

The same principles should be followed for illustrations that were set up for Bible-story books for beginners. A broader knowledge of background and understanding can be counted on in the primary age. However, there should be no material representations of mystical experience such as halos, angels, light from heaven, and so on. These children still interpret symbols in ways not originally intended by adults. Nor is it possible to explain them satisfactorily to primary children. Teachers are still limited by the mental and emotional immaturities, and by lack of spatial and historical sense in teaching primary children. The teacher remembers that it is not what she purposes to teach, but what the children are capable of learning that has value in the use of the Bible. A list of recommended Bible story books will be found at the end of this chapter.

The Emphasis on Teachings About Jesus

Children in the first three grades can increasingly begin to appreciate a connected story of Jesus. Emphasis should be placed upon his teachings about God, upon the purpose of his life and ministry, upon his attitude toward people, upon what he thought was important. It is possible gradually to develop a simple story of Jesus with older second

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and third grades. One second grade on Easter Sunday enjoyed remembering Jesus. They thought of him as the great helper and friend. The resurrection story was not told.

The emphasis was placed on the positive from the child's viewpoint. Children even in the third grade have no comprehension of the resurrection story. If a primary child introduces the crucifixion or resurrection narrative, as he probably will because of lack of understanding of his religious needs by some well-meaning adult or because he has heard the crucifixion and resurrection discussed in adult groups, the teacher should deal with it as a fact. So far as possible, she should not allow primary children to dwell upon the details or to connect feeling with them. This is unfortunately not always possible for sensitive children, as any primary teacher knows. It takes experience through years of courageous living and thinking to enter into the meaning of Easter. This, of course, the primary child does not have. If he is helped to think of what we like to remember of Jesus at Easter, he is not left outside of the rejoicing fellowship of the church in this festival time, and he is given a positive approach.

A study of the backgrounds of the boyhood of Jesus is important. Primary children seem to get a sense of reality of Jesus from this study as from no other approach to his life. Care must be taken that they do not think all the material is found in the Bible. Sources outside of the Bible should be discussed so that they may understand why we think Jesus lived through such a boyhood when the Bible does not record it. Teachers should follow the example of the Gospels and attribute to Jesus no supernatural powers during his boyhood. Neither should they make Jesus too extremely good. They should, rather, present him as the fifty-second verse of the second chapter of Luke does, a boy who grew strong and thoughtful, who was popular with people and who had keen religious insights and a growing fellowship with God. Nothing adds to the con-

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fusion of the God and Jesus concepts of children more than teaching them to worship the little Lord Jesus and to think of him as up in the sky. It is interesting to note how children studying a unit on the boyhood of Jesus reveal their ideas of him. Their drawings at first show him as unreal. They are almost pre-Raphaelite in quality. This conception, of course, comes from the background of their teaching. The drawings gradually reveal a sense of reality and of childlikeness, a feeling of kinship with themselves.

Contacts with Jewish People

Beginning with the third grade, the Bible should also be used to build up a sense of confidence and fellowship with modern Jewish people.

Contacts may be made with Jews and Jewish religious practices today. One primary group built the village of Nazareth. When they placed the synagogue upon the village's high place, they were interested to know that there were synagogues in their own city. The leader consulted a rabbi who invited the children to visit his synagogue. He pointed out to them its rectangular architecture, the ark, the scrolls, the reading desk, the seven-branched candlestick, and so on. These children are now thirteen and fourteen years of age. One mother reports that a scroll made at that time has been preserved and that the visit to the synagogue has never been forgotten by her little daughter.

One Easter season the writer was privileged to have a little Jewish girl among the group of primary children. When the Palm Sunday story was in the process of telling, the leader spoke of how Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to keep an old feast of the Jews. She began describing the Passover. The little Jewish girl's face brightened. "We are going to have that feast. We are going to have it at my uncle's house. I am going to ask some of the questions this year." "Do you know what some of the questions are?" the leader asked. "No," she said, "but I will come

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back again and tell you what they are." After the Pass-over, the little Jewish girl did report on the questions. The leader felt that this contact made a genuine contribution to the work of the group.

Pictures

Pictures portraying Bible subjects should be simple in detail, accurate, avoid symbolic elements, crude colors, and anything of terrifying or fear-producing nature.

One problem with reference to Bible pictures for primary children grows out of the child's search for a picture of God. Almost any old man with a white beard, dressed in a flowing robe, becomes God for the first grade. Perhaps one of the approaches to a spiritual concept of God may grow out of the child's struggle with the idea that a picture of God cannot be made. Children, beginning with the second grade, should understand that pictures of Jesus are imaginary; that they are pictures artists imagine to illustrate events; that we have no picture of Jesus.

Often the picture study is a good approach to a Bible incident that may have activity-suggesting value but be too complicated or advanced theologically or historically for development as a story. For instance, the boy Samuel serving in the temple may be used. The teacher can be true to the helpful part of the incident through the picture study without doing violence to the Bible material or to child understanding.

Sometimes the picture study is a way out when using material that needs so much historical background in story form that it is cumbersome. The picture study emphasizes the desirable incident and avoids the necessity for the entire sweep of background. We live in a visually minded age, and picture storybooks and pictures are of more importance than ever in the teaching of children. The greatest care should be taken that good art and accurate pictures of a suitable type are used. Children thoroughly enjoy making pictures to illustrate Biblical events.

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A telebinocular, electrical stereoscope, with three dimensional pictures is an excellent piece of equipment for the resource library, second through sixth grade. It is not expensive, as pictures may be added gradually.

Dramatization

Dramatization is another method of using the Bible with primary children. The dramatization by the first grade will be spontaneous, and no costumes or properties will be necessary. First-grade children can develop simple dialogue and plots. Several children can try out for each character and the group make the choice. One second grade dramatized the story of "Elisha and the Room on the Roof." They chose the best actors for each part, developed the plot, and gave the dramatization at a party for the first grade. No properties were used. As the children grow older there will be more complexity of plot and of dialogue. They will wish the teacher to make a record of the dialogue, and there will be less spontaneous dramatization. They will be more interested in painting backgrounds, working out scenery and costumes. The dramatization will take a longer period to develop if it is to be of any real value. A third grade dramatized "David and the Sleeping King." They made spears, a crown, and long robes at home. The teacher acted as secretary, recording the dialogue as they gave it.

Singing dramatizations are also of value. The writer knows of a combined first and second grade who are working out at the present time an operetta on the baby Moses. They are directed by a skillful musician. This would be an ideal activity in a vacation church school or for an expanded session.

Another group is planning to play a Bible verse set to music (Psalm 104. 33a) on chimes. A "motion picture" may be made by a third grade telling incidents in the life of Jesus or illustrating the stories he told. Friezes may be painted illustrating these stories. They may be made on

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manila paper and occupy an entire side of a room. The children may work on the friezes with tempera paints or crayons. If the children work with crayons, they do better work on a table or on the floor. Then they attach the frieze to the wall.

Tests, Riddles, and Games

Tests, riddles, and games recognize the primary child's love of play. A second grade enjoyed answering riddles and making them for each other. They were based on familiar Bible stories. One riddle was

I had a little brother,
The king would have hurt him,
But my mother and I hid him in a basket boat.
Who am I?
What was my baby brother's name?

A third grade worked on a completion test on Psalm 100. All primary children like the game "I see a picture" (describing some familiar Bible picture in the room). They enjoy work sheets where they can draw the answer to the riddle or the test with a drawing.

Speaking Choirs and Litanies

A musician may arrange the third grade according to quality of speaking voice and teach them to repeat a psalm such as Psalm 100 in unison. One third grade visited a second grade at Thanksgiving and recited Psalm 100 for them.

In late second and third grade, children enjoy writing litanies in which a devotional verse from the Bible is used as the repeated phrase. For example, a litany written by one group began

For all thy care and goodness,
We praise thee, O God.
For the ripe fruit of the autumn,
We praise thee, O God.

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There is infinite variety for the use of the Bible in the late second and third grade.

To Summarize

1. Use well-told Bible stories, chosen mostly from the New Testament. Do not depend upon them as the only material nor storytelling as the only method. Use Bible stories and verses to help children solve problems, work out standards, gain clearer religious and social concepts, plan activities, and to worship.

2. Introduce units that furnish knowledge of backgrounds of the Bible.

3. Help children to become interested in the Bible as a book.

4. Use discrimination in the choice of memory materials and plan for their frequent recall.

5. Avoid a dogmatic approach to conduct teaching.

6. A primary child should know that the Bible tells of God and of Jesus, that it has beautiful verses that can be used in worship, that "it tells us what to do" as one eight-year-old put it. The older children may begin to know that the Bible has two divisions and that there are a number of books in each one. They may become familiar with several versions of the Bible.

Questions

Choose from your course of study examples to illustrate the methods of Bible teaching described in this chapter.

Work out a simple best choice test based on the Bible stories used during the last month.

Try out with a group of primary children one of the methods described in this chapter, one that you have never used before. Write a report giving the steps used in developing the method and your evaluation of the procedure.

For Further Study

Which Way for Our Children? Munkres, Alberta. Charles Scribner's Sons.

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Present-Day Problems in Religious Teaching, Lee, Hetty. The Macmillan Company.

The Child's Approach to Religion, Fox, H. W. Harper & Bros.

Teaching Primaries in the Church School, Smither, Ethel L. The Methodist Book Concern.

Chapters I, III, V, and VI.

Character in Human Relations, Hartshorne, Hugh. Charles Scribner's Sons.

A Primary Teacher Steps Out, Kallen, Miriam. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co.

Source Material for Children

Nelson Standard Bible Readers.

Primers: *First Bible Stories; Jesus and the Children*.

First Reader: *Bible Stories to Read*.

Second Reader: *Stories of Long Ago*.

Bible Books for Small Readers. Thos. Nelson & Sons.

Petersham, Maud & Miska, *The Christ Child*. Doubleday, Doran & Co. A beautifully illustrated story of the boy Jesus as told from the Bible itself. This is a valuable book for late third-grade, and fourth- and fifth-grade children. It is too advanced for younger children.

Danielson, Frances W., *Bible Story Book*. The Pilgrim Press. Contains some good Bible stories for third- and fourth-grade children.

The Story Book of Things We Use by the Petershams has excellent background material for teaching units on Biblical life and times.

Keith, Marion, *Glad Days in Galilee*, for late third grade. The Abingdon Press.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIBLE IN THE FOURTH, FIFTH, AND SIXTH GRADES

To Do Before Reading This Chapter

Read Chapter VII. Note what is said about the use of the Bible in grade three.

Consult a teacher in fourth, fifth, or sixth grade in public school about what children are asked to study at home and about methods of supervised study. Ask about the teaching of history and geography. When does definite study in these subjects begin?

Take the following test. Mark with an x each statement you believe to be true, with a circle those you do not consider correct.

1. Junior boys and girls wish to find things out for themselves.
2. The junior is a difficult age physically for children, since they have little energy.
3. Junior children like sameness of teaching.
4. A connected story of Jesus' life is of interest to juniors.
5. A sixth-grade child has a rapidly developing historical sense.
6. Problems of discipline may be largely avoided by good methods of teaching.
7. The junior is the best age for memory work.
8. Juniors are too old to be interested in play.
9. Juniors like to sit still and listen most of the time.

When Older Childhood Begins

The break between older childhood and younger childhood does not really come with the fourth grade. Glandular changes occur, and ability to think in connected logical fashion begins its rapid development normally with children in the third grade. This change has been discussed in the preceding chapter, and much that will be said of the use of the Bible with older children has been suggested in the plans for the third grade. From the third grade, children are able to read with increasing ease and are interested in books just for their own sake.

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Juniors' Approach to Learning

Let us see some of the special methods for the use of the Bible with Junior children. A fundamental principle is that children should use the Bible itself under the teacher's guidance. In the past it has been thought that the good method was for the teacher to present the Bible material while the children listened. Many discipline problems with older children grew out of the fact that teaching was centered in teacher rather than in pupil activity. Junior children like to work things out for themselves, to have a study plan that they may follow. This very interest is a gold mine to a teacher who wishes to help children begin intelligent habits of Bible study.

Supervised Study

Consultation with a fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-grade teacher in public school regarding plans for supervised study will be of great benefit to any teacher working with junior children in a church-school group.

It is not the general custom now for home work to be assigned to children in public school unless there is a need for special emphasis at some place where the child is having difficulty. This means that junior groups in the church school ought to have supervised study periods. The pupil's book may be used as a workbook during this period. What we once thought of as daily Bible readings could be used as material for investigation. The teacher can move about the group, giving individual children help when they meet difficult problems. The blackboard may be used to suggest lines of study. References may be listed there. For example, a group of junior children were trying to discover Jesus' attitude toward people who were regarded with dislike and were even despised by their fellow countrymen. The teacher suggested to the group that they consult their own books for Bible references that reflected Jesus' point of view. She listed additional passages on the board. The

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children had notebooks in which they recorded their findings. These findings were reported later to the entire class.

The Workbook

A great enthusiasm has developed recently for workbooks, juniors looking up references and filling in blank spaces. These workbooks have their value in supervised study, especially for sixth grade, provided their use does not consume all the time of the class period. They can be a step backward into a rigid, formal information-centered method of teaching. A re-examination of page 41 will show how an exclusive use of this method may prevent the church school from carrying out some of its important objectives for religious education. The thoughtful, experienced junior teacher will probably use them occasionally in a short session and more frequently in an expanded session.

Committee Work

Another method of using the Bible with juniors is organized through committee work. Incidents from the Bible are clipped, mounted on cardboard, and given to various committees for report, or the references are placed on the cards. The juniors look them up and list their findings below the references.

Memory Work

Committees may work on the selection of Biblical material to be used in a worship service for the class and for the department, or to share with some other group as a service enterprise. This lends a motive for the memorization of Biblical material. Junior children have arrived at the age when they can retain what they have memorized, provided it is used often enough and with enough meaningful association. As we have said before, a good educational principle is "provide for overlearning."

Certain principles for the selection of Biblical material

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should be determined. There should be motive for the memorization. The child should have some reason, not just memorize aimlessly. This purpose might grow out of desire to contribute to a worship service, use in a dramatization, or in a program that the juniors are planning for the final night of a vacation school.

The junior should help to choose his own memory material. Not all Biblical passages appeal to all grown people. One passage has meaning for one person and very little meaning for another. The idea of a verse for the whole class to remember denies the right of the Bible to speak for itself to the individuals in the class.

If the children are to select Biblical material to use in a worship service, dramatization, and so on, they will need time to make the selection and to memorize the material. With none of the children through the first six grades is it profitable to use a different memory verse every Sunday? Children do not learn memory material so rapidly, and it would have little meaning if they could because there is too little chance for thoughtful recall. Memory materials should be chosen in blocks connected with units rather than for separate sessions.

Not only should the children choose the memory material that they learn, but they should also choose the translation that they memorize. There was a time when we thought of children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades as in the "golden age of memory." Most of the psychological assumptions on which this theory was based have been exploded by Professor Thorndyke. Juniors memorize no more rapidly than adults if the latter really wish to learn. In fact, according to well-established tests, the advantage is slightly in favor of the adult. It is also true that juniors will not retain what they do not continue to use. There should be well-selected memory material, the boys and the girls having shared in the selection. It should be used in connection with many worth-while experiences that will lend additional meaning to it.

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The Place of the Bible Story

There is a place for the telling of Bible stories to juniors. At times, beautifully told Bible stories can be used in connection with worship. There is, however, the danger of stories stirring children very deeply and going no further, so the children get the false satisfaction of living out vicariously an experience in worth-while living that they should be striving to achieve. Just as the movies can be a dangerous experience for children, since they help children to be satisfied emotionally with being spectators rather than participants in life, so Bible stories can be equally dangerous regardless of how beautifully they are told. A study of a cross section of the membership of the average church will reveal how many of its members have been trained to engage in just such activity. To sit and listen and to respond emotionally is about as far as their habits carry them. The work of the church is carried on the shoulders of the few who as children and young people, probably because they come from active church families, had opportunity to practice as well as to listen. We do not wish Bible stories to be deterrents to the wholesome, Christian life of children of any age.

The Heroic and Biographical Story

There was a time when teachers relied almost entirely upon biographical sketches of heroic lives in their attempt to influence the older child's growth in spiritual insight and ethical standards. This practice was based upon the theory that the junior age was exclusively the age of hero worship. Like many generalizations about children, the idea of hero worship as confined to the junior age no longer holds. Children of all ages and men and women are interested in heroes. The hero of a nursery class child may be some interesting and kind postman, but he is a hero nevertheless. Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* taught us long ago that hero worship is not confined to any age group.

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The use of hero stories places certain necessities upon the junior teacher. For one thing, the hero should be viewed through his life purposes. If heroic stories from the Old Testament are to be told, they can only be used after children have a sense of historic continuity so that the teacher avoids a seeming approval of a crude conception of God or of unchristian conduct, or, on the other hand, changes the story so that it is not an honest telling.

The teacher is also careful to avoid the habit of being satisfied with indefinite thoughtless teaching, telling idealistic stories and hoping that in some way they will influence character. The ways in which stories influence character are often indirect and we do not wish to overteach, becoming so strained and formal that the boy and girl do not really enjoy the Bible. Yet purposes will not be hazy. Too much dependence with juniors upon the use of the told Bible story leaves too little time for guiding the junior's own quest for knowledge, his understanding of God, his experiences in Christian service, and his training in worship.

Frequently the telling of a Bible story may quicken interest in the Bible. Once the writer told the story of Nehemiah to a sixth grade. "That's a swell story. Where did you find it?" the boys asked. "Surely it is not in the Bible," several exclaimed in surprise. "I'd like to read it myself," two boys remarked thoughtfully. "Do you know of any other good ones there?"

Bible-Story Books and Reference Books

Junior children, in addition to hearing well-told stories, properly prefer to read stories for themselves. A list of Bible-story books recommended for juniors will be found at the end of this chapter.

Junior boys and girls can use reference books also that give them a greater understanding of background and customs and social and economic conditions reflected in Bible accounts.

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One junior group divided into interest groups when studying a nature unit; one group chose birds, another flowers, a boys' group animals, and so on. Each group decided to hunt for references that told of native flowers and animals in Palestine. The children learned to use a concordance. The boys were fascinated over one reference, for the teacher told them that persons did not agree today about what animal the reference meant. Some say it is a badger, others that a seal is meant. Billy studied the reference long and hard. "Well, I'm sure it is ———," he said. The children investigated natural life in their own neighborhood as the study progressed. A visit to a sheep farm brought about a contrast in American methods of sheep raising and Oriental ones. Some of the psalms took on new meaning, especially Psalm 23. Drills and games on animals and on Bible references were enjoyed. The teacher held the picture like a "flash" card. The children stood with their backs to her, turned quickly and called the name of the nature object and connected a Bible reference with it.

The spirit of play has a powerful influence on junior boys and girls. Marie Cole Powell¹ calls it one of the "wants" of childhood, needs that must be satisfied if children are to grow well. She describes a junior group who imagined themselves part of Abraham's tribe, built themselves Oriental tents, sat about a campfire telling stories from Genesis that answer age-old questions of life and death, right and wrong, of how the world came to be. Through play they were entering into a larger life.

Another junior group enjoyed sitting about a campfire and telling riddles such as the ones Samson used in Judges. They prepared and ate a Syrian meal.

The sixth grade should understand clearly the difference between a Bible reference and a source book that sheds light on a reference. They may determine the difference between Biblical account and its expansion for vividness.

¹ *The Elementary Magazine.*

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The writer recalls a junior class in a rural school who were studying Psalm 122. The boys were asked to read certain materials that explained the verses, gave geographical and historical references and described festival customs of the Jews and temple worship. They found the position of Jerusalem on the map and discussed why it was almost impregnable. Jerusalem was added to the outline map the class was developing. Then the boys made reports from their readings. Pictures were shown. The psalm was read from the Bible itself. The leader had asked the pastor to use the psalm in the morning worship some Sunday, and the boys were impressed by this use.

Study of Bible Background

The background units that were suggested for primary children may be continued and expanded in the junior period. The boys and girls will enjoy an investigation into the festivals of the Jewish people. Visits to a rabbi or to a synagogue should be planned. One junior group made a succah when they were learning about the Feast of Booths. Some Jewish friends gave them advice and information. This unit at Thanksgiving time lends new meaning and religious value to current Thanksgiving practices and to the historical American Thanksgiving about which the children hear so much at school. Such units as *A Study of Bible Lands* and *How the Early Hebrews Learned as They Lived* are important units for junior children.

Map Work

Map work is a valuable supplement to stories of Bible lands and also in connection with other units. Both product maps and picture maps can be planned. The map may be a large outline one and the products attached to it with rubber cement or with strips of gummed paper. In vacation schools a large relief map of Palestine can be made out of doors if the ground is available. **A junior class in**

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California made a very large outdoor one. They coated the surface with cement and this made it possible to add topographical features.

Maps may make events of the Bible vivid and real. As one writer has suggested, a map of the Holy Land should be something through which the children can see the people and the country rather than just something to look at. His group prepared paper pulp out of newspaper, glue and warm water. They built their map on a large table. It was a topographical one, showing the four major parallel divisions of Palestine—coastal plain, mountains, deep gorge of the Jordan and eastern table land.

"Travel trips" to the Holy Land can be arranged in connection with map work. The juniors may consult travel agencies about routes, boats and necessary preparation and equipment. A "log" of the trip may help the class to organize and evaluate its findings. The Palestine of today may be contrasted with ancient Palestine. Bible references may be hunted out in connection with each of the places visited. A worship service may be developed in connection with the "visit" to Jerusalem.

Studies of Jesus' Life

For the first time the story of Jesus may be seen as a whole. Of course the teacher will be careful not to give an impression that the Gospels are an exact account in sequence of Jesus' life. There will be no attempt to place events too rigidly, one in connection with another. A record of the teachings of Jesus may be included in the story of his life. Tests may be given to ascertain the pupil's grasp. Some juniors have organized their stories of Jesus around a series of thoughtfully selected masterpieces. Other juniors like to illustrate their accounts themselves. Some juniors in Salt Lake City recently sent to the writer excellent books on the life of Jesus, illustrated with drawings from a story paper.

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The boyhood of Jesus is a unit enjoyed by the third or fourth grades.²

A Study of the Bible

The problem of how the Bible came to be may be investigated and discussed, and the children may make worthwhile discoveries in this fascinating area of study. A mastery of the mechanics of this library of books is essential.

Such a plan may be twofold. There may be a unit to initiate activities that will give the pupils chances to master the mechanical details of the Bible, learn how to find and use the various books, get some ideas of the kinds of literature found in each division. This type of unit is discussed more fully in Chapter IX.

Another unit will include a history of the Bible. It will include the beginnings before written records, the way the various books grew out of life situations. There will be simple contrasts of the various gospels. An idea of why and where each one was written may be gained.

The study will continue beyond the period of the fixing of the canon (decision of books included). The pupils will gain a greater appreciation of the value of the Bible as they learn how many struggles and dangers men have endured to preserve the Scriptures. They will learn the stories of heroic persons like Wycliffe, Luther, and Tyndale.

The study will continue to show the work of the Bible scholars at the time of James I of England. Then it will give accounts of modern translations such as the Revised Version and of man's continuing search for meaning in the Book.

Juniors are usually stirred by heroic stories about the carrying of the Bible to many lands. They are interested in foreign languages, and the difficulties of Bible translation quicken their interest.

² See Chap. VII.

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There should be units of study that are definitely purposed to bring friendly relations with Jewish neighbors.³

One class of juniors became interested in forms of worship practiced by different communions. They decided to ask permission to visit a synagogue. The rabbi responded with a friendly letter of invitation. There was a discussion to determine courteous ways of behavior and also what questions to ask the rabbi.

The boys and girls were especially interested in the ark (the closet containing the scrolls). The rabbi removed some of the scrolls and pointed out interesting things about the beautiful coverings such as the tiny bells in the knobs at the ends of the stick. These ends were of brass, and on one scroll were fashioned like watchtowers. There were brazen plates hung by chains on the outside of the coverings. To this a tiny brass hand called a yad was attached by a chain. The rabbi pointed with it as he read. There was a lovely red velvet cover and underneath a band of fine linen attached with a clasp. The scroll was unrolled on the reading desk and the children listened as the rabbi read Psalm 100. They knew the psalm and repeated it. The teacher called attention to a Bible in English and the slight differences in this translation to the version most familiar with them. "My, but they think a lot of their Bible," one boy remarked as the group rode home. "They wouldn't just throw a Bible on a table" said another. "I wish they had the story of Jesus," one little girl added. "They call the Bible the law of the Lord," the teacher said, and she quoted

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul:
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

.

³A good reference book for leaders who wish to guide such a unit is Basil Mathews, *Jews and the World Ferment*.

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More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much
fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honey-
comb.

—Psalm 19. 7, 8, 10.

The teacher was interested to see the pupils pick up class Bibles that had been thrown carelessly about and stack them neatly.

The children will not respect or even be very much interested in a book they abuse. Then, too, boys and girls should see the Bible in all churches. Too frequently the pulpit Bible is the only copy available in many a church. Each child should have his copy of the Bible and learn to refer to it constantly in class work. Quarterlies or work books that may be substituted for a copy of the Bible defeat their own purposes of Bible study. A good junior work-book sends the class frequently to the Bible itself. As well as printed passages there should be references for pupils and teachers.

Question

Plan the synopsis for a brief unit on the boyhood of Jesus.

For Further Study

The Church and the Children, Jones, Mary Alice. The Cokesbury Press.

Which Way for Our Children? Munkres, Alberta. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Youth and the Bible, Streibert, Muriel Anne. The Macmillan Company.

The Living Bible, Bower, William Clayton. Harper & Bros.

The New Era in Religious Education, Chap. VIII, MacLean, A. H. Beacon Press.

Junior Method in the Church School, Powell, Marie Cole. The Abingdon Press.

Teaching Junior Boys and Girls, Eakin, Mildred Moody. The Methodist Book Concern.

STORY BOOKS

The Story Peter Told, Ball, Elsie. A retelling of the Gospel of Mark for fourth- and fifth-grade children. Henry Holt & Co.

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The Story of the Bible, Bowie, Walter Russell. For children from the sixth grade on. The Abingdon Press.

Paul the Dauntless, Mathews, Basil. For older children.

Bible Story Book, Danielson, Frances W. For the fourth grade. The Pilgrim Press.

The Christ Child, Petersham, Maud and Miska. Doubleday, Doran and Co.

Good Bible stories for telling are found in:

Rules of the Game, Lambertson, Floyd W. The Methodist Book Concern.

Followers of the Marked Trail, Frayser, Nannie Lee. The Abingdon Press.

Greatness Passing By, Niebuhr, Hulda. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Old Testament Stories, Fox, H. W.

The regular courses of study for junior children.

For a lovely devotional use of the Bible by older boys and girls see *Children's Praises*, Simpson, N., and Cox, L. E. Student Christian Movement Press, London.

Books on Method

Teaching Junior Boys and Girls, Eakin, Mildred Moody. The Methodist Book Concern.

Worship Training for Juniors, Jones, Mary Alice. The Cokesbury Press.

Worship Training for Juniors, Baldwin, Josephine L. The Methodist Book Concern.

Techniques of Progressive Teaching, Melvin, Arthur Gordon. John Day Co.

Curriculum in Religious Education, Bower, William Clayton. Chapters XIII, XIV, XV. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Character and Human Relations, Hartshorne, Hugh. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Construction of Junior Church School Curricula, Acheson, Edna L., Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Teaching Religion Today, Betts, George Herbert. The Abingdon Press.

CHAPTER IX

THE BIBLE IN THE FOURTH, FIFTH, AND SIXTH GRADES (CONTINUED)

Use of Devotional Materials

Junior boys and girls need training in the devotional use of the Bible. The Junior Department may have a worship committee or each of the grades may act as this committee in turn. With adult counseling the boys and girls may choose hymns, poems, Bible passages, and prayers. They may arrange these materials around some unifying emphasis into a worship service. Many of the passages chosen for memorization may be for this purpose. When a junior class has learned beautiful devotional selections, they should feel that the department leader is eager to have them share with the entire group.

It quickens a boy's or a girl's spirit to hold fellowship with people of another age and land. And a devotional use of the Bible makes this possible. A junior group had a star party on a July night, when the heavens seem to lean to earth. As the boys and girls identified the constellations and reviewed the marvelous facts of light years, orbits, and so on, the teacher told of how star study had been of great interest to Oriental peoples. She spoke of the Magi among the Persians. One boy related how an uncle had told him of the beauty of the night sky in Palestine. The leader started to repeat Psalm 19. 1-5 and the group joined in.

The leader spoke of how the Jewish people knew the stars. An assistant repeated verses from both Job¹ and Amos,² where they speak of well-known constellations.

¹ Job 38. 31.

² Amos 5. 8.

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Through such a worship experience children can at times come closer to the Bible than by any other road.

The use of the Bible in devotional ways in connection with studies such as nature units may contribute to the children's growing Christian philosophy of life. The worship is a climax to the entire study. Thus Bible study may contribute to another of the aims of the church school and of the home, the growth of a consciousness of God's presence.

Studies of the Psalms connected with picture and hymn studies, with the writing of litanies, and with the painting of friezes are exceedingly valuable, especially at Christmas and at Easter. Such a use of Biblical material helps the child's philosophy of life and his understanding of the universe to become religious rather than material-centered.

Pictures

Bible pictures and their interpretations will not be neglected. An interest in the familiar Christmas stories may be stimulated by dividing juniors into committees for study. One group may have German interpretations of the Nativity, another Italian, a third French and Spanish, a fourth British and American. Appropriate hymns may be associated with each of the pictures. The groups in turn will share their studies with the entire group.

The Easter message in art is another interesting study. An examination of such pictures as "The Last Supper," by Da Vinci and by Melchers; "Peter and John Running to the Tomb," by Burnand; "The Women at the Tomb," by Von Uhde, by Copping, and by Matania; "The Walk to Emmaus," by Melchers, will probably be included in such a unit.

A frieze may be arranged under the title, "Jesus Belongs to All the World," and the pictures of Jesus done by the world's artists will be arranged by nations. Some of the Oriental pictures, like the Japanese Zacchaeus and the Chi-

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nese rolls illustrating incidents from Jesus' life, will find a place among the works of European and American artists.

Juniors enjoy picture strips and they lift the child's passionate absorption in the so-called funny paper to a helpful level. Boys and girls enjoy making such strips for themselves.

Facing Social Problems

Juniors are now old enough to face directly such economic and social problems as working for peace and against economic and social inequalities and injustices. So units on these specialized subjects will be helpful for them. Alcohol education may be approached directly as well as indirectly as with younger children. Boys and girls are beginning to feel themselves a part of community and national life, and so they need religious interpretations of citizenship problems. A careful study of the prophets and of their teachings and of the teachings of Jesus, especially those that deal with respect for personality and consecration to the kingdom of God, are of great value. The use of the Bible in social problems is an essential part of the religious training of this age group.

Junior boys and girls begin also to feel the stirrings of vocational interest. How do adults wish them to regard a lifework, as a way to make money or as a plan for the dedication of a life? The final acceptance of the Christian life may be determined by one's attitude to vocation. Not only one's own vocation but that of every human being must be tested by the standards of respect for human personality and of the stewardship of life.

It is impossible, of course, to teach the one right way of settling labor disputes and other problems that lead to class conflict. When life is so complex and so rapidly changing, no one knows the complete answer. But the Christian Church may help children to understand and to practice, so far as possible, the Christian point of view. Sometimes a practice of such a point of view begins in homely ways in

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the nursery and kindergarten and starts with a warm personal regard for workers, the sexton at church, the postman, the fireman, and so on. Children are helped to think of their essential services to their fellows and to regard them as friends. The Christian religion is a leaven working in, changing and redeeming all of life, or it is not actually a reality.

Juniors may begin to be supercilious unless the emphasis on vocations and the practice of courteous, helpful conduct to workers is continued. To judge a vocation by "how much money does he get" may be like love of money, the root of all evil. One junior teacher, knowing of juniors' love of rhythm and of activity, began a unit on the Christian interpretation of vocations with Margaret Prescott Montague's poem, "The Steel Worker," which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* several years ago.

Control of Conduct

One little ten-year-old said in a confidential Sunday chat with her teacher: "Why can't I be as nice at home as I am away from home? I do get so ashamed, but I get cross again." Juniors are conscious of their own struggle for control of conduct. They seek a firmer grasp on principles that will shape patterns of behavior for them. Just as teachers face a transition in their thinking about the use of Bible material that gives sanctions to conduct for primary children, so junior leaders hesitate over a direct use of Biblical material in this way with their pupils. "We are so likely to get 'preachy,' and you know how a junior closes his mind to that kind of teaching," one junior teacher said. Probably the indirect approach, meeting problems as they arise and helping children to study, to come to their own conclusions about the teachings of Jesus in this realm, is the better approach.

This kind of teaching will continue all through the year, not be set aside in a special unit. Two boys have a fight over a saw in vacation school. Two little girl chums alter-

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nately ignore, and stare and giggle at a strange little girl. The boys of the neighborhood make a predatory raid on a cornfield. What will the mother or the teacher do? Probably nothing while feeling runs high except to separate combatants, show disgust, and remove the booty from the raiders, seeing that they make just restitution. But when the children "cool down" and in connection with other activities, the adult will help the boys and girls dispassionately to analyze their own conduct and to discover standards that will be more considerate and profitable in the future.

The adult will also seek causes for breakdowns in behavior. Sometimes they indicate a need different from the apparent one. A boy was always being banged by his fellows, pushed, tripped on every occasion. The teacher sought the reason, for the boy had a charming manner toward adults. She discovered that he was just the opposite with persons his own age, for he did not know how to get along with other children. A long illness in early life and an overfearful mother had delayed his social adjustment. The teacher began to discourage his too brilliant answers, his lingering around the teachers to discuss questions. She gave him tasks to work out with the other boys. She had conferences with the other boys and then in turn discussed the trouble with the boy himself. She insisted on both sides analyzing the situation. There was a gradual, in fact, a very gradual, improvement. At least the boy was tolerated and was tolerable to the others. Many problems of juniors like this one should have been caught by teacher or parent long before the child reaches late childhood.

The adult will never let the children think that all conduct problems are solved finally and that no thought is necessary on their part. There are some things children must learn "just are not done," but their learning is much more effective even in these cases if the boy or girl thinks through the reasons for social disapproval. Dogmatic or nagging attitudes will be avoided. The more objective the teacher, the more she keeps a firm hold on her sense of

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humor, the more helpful she will be. She will, of course, never allow herself to become emotionally involved in the situation.

Record Books

Keeping notebooks for findings or scrapbooks are good activities to use with certain units of work. Workbooks may be used profitably. All record books can be overdone if used as an exclusive activity, of course, or as a substitute for study by the teacher who is looking for an easy way "to keep the class interested."

Notebook work can be overemphasized also if it means too much writing for pupils in fourth or fifth grade. If the work is so trivial as to seem silly to the boys and girls, it had better be omitted. The writer recalls a junior class in a small-town church laboriously adding small pictures of sun, moon, waters, etc., to a notebook story of the creation in one of the more formal types of junior courses. These boys worked in gardens, raised their own crops and were used to hard jobs and reality in daily life. They took leading parts in the fine activities of a Junior Citizens' League at public school. "Do we have to do this?" one boy finally asked in desperation. At once there was a chorus of assent from the other boys.

Recently notebooks from a class of juniors in a town on the west coast were sent to the writer. They told the story of Jesus and were organized and illustrated by the boys and girls. The work had required real thought and effort and contained a worthy record of this class's experience. Some of the pupils had added typed copies of their own narratives of Jesus. The writer could imagine how the boys and girls must have enjoyed the work.

Dramatizations

Juniors enjoy dramatizations. These dramatizations will be much more ambitious than those of the primary group. They will be less spontaneous, more thoughtfully and in-

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telligently organized. One junior group dramatized the story of the finding of the scroll at the time of Josiah. Another class made a play of the story of Jeremiah. The dialogue was a combination of the words of the Bible, plus the children's additions. The sixth grade in another church arranged a pageant of the story of the Bible for Promotion Day. They had worked on it for several months while they were studying the unit, the story of our Bible. The hymn, "Forward Through the Ages," was used to unify the pageant. Children who have had training in a creative approach to music can develop simple oratorios based upon the Christmas message and upon some of the Psalms.

Constructive Activities

Juniors will enjoy making peepshows, marionettes, and movies and puppet shows in connection with their studies of Bible life and times. A sixth grade made an excellent real moving picture illustrating the development of the idea of God during the Old-Testament period. Many junior groups have written their own stories of Jesus and dramatized them. One group, having seen the grottoes at a certain retreat that illustrate incidents from the life of Jesus, made their own tableaux.

Units on worship in the long ago and now may help juniors to appreciate the beauty of hymns and of the psalms. They may contrast the hymns with psalms that have similar themes, as Psalm 19 with "The Spacious Firmament on High." In connection with this study the boys and girls may enjoy hunting through reference books to discover the kind of musical instruments used in early worship. They may construct pipes, horns, drums, cymbals, and connect their constructive activities with Psalm 150, the account of the dedication of the temple under Solomon,³ and other similar references.

³I Kings, Chap. 8.

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Instrumental music may be connected with this study as Wilson, "The Shepherd Boy," with flutes and pipes; the horn music in the "Grand March" from "Aida" with horns, and Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C Sharp Minor," with bell music. The story of David who soothed Saul's depression with music may be dramatized.⁴ The teacher can carry the study further, introducing the development of the organ with the story of Johann Bach and use one of his chorales. The piano and its story may be added. Such units of appreciation will accomplish many aims. The Bible sings its devotions in the child heart. Give him chances to hear.

One sixth grade made a newspaper. In it they reported as though they were eyewitnesses of the various adventures of Paul. These stories and other stories of the spread of the Christian Church gave greater meaning to their growing appreciation of their own church fellowship.

The problem with junior children, as has been said before, is not one of presenting Biblical material, but of guiding them in study, investigation, and worth-while use of Biblical materials.

Juniors at Easter

The Easter story is still an historical story for junior children. Fortunately, children under twelve have not yet come to any real understanding through experience of what the crucifixion and resurrection mean. Presenting one's body, a living sacrifice, is rightly incomprehensible to any child, though juniors are becoming conscious of cruelty and misuse of power. Emotional immaturity is still a characteristic of these children in spite of their keen intellect, curiosity, their growing ability to organize mentally and their deeper insights. One study of Easter may be a comparative examination of the Easter narratives in the three Synoptic Gospels. Probably the best way to help children to understand the meaning of Easter is to give

⁴ See Taylor picture of this subject and the poem, "Saul," by Robert Browning.

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them opportunities of seeing life enriched and made more meaningful for others through their own efforts and through the heroic sacrificial efforts of Jesus and of the followers of Jesus. They should see all Christian service through the ages and today as efforts to follow in a limited way the experience of Jesus at Easter.

Principles in Using Miracles

With the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades—indeed, with children in the older primary group—the teacher will at times face the problem of the child's reaction to the miraculous elements in Bible stories. We refer again to Chapter III, where the teacher's approach to this problem was discussed in full. May we suggest in addition that the teacher will avoid any supercilious negative attitude toward the miraculous? Instead of giving the child her own point of view, she should, rather, withhold it until she has helped him to his own conclusions. A teacher of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade children should help them to realize that in the field of religion persons hold conclusions tentatively, that as they grow in life experiences and in fellowship with God they are likely constantly to revise their thinking because spiritual understanding grows. Then the teacher should guide the child's study and interpretation of what he already knows so that he will come to his own conclusions rather than accept those of the teacher. The teacher has an additional opportunity here for helping the child take first steps in a lifelong approach to Bible study and understanding.

The teacher's point of view and belief is not the most important thing in teaching except as she shares it with children, helping them to have religious experiences and guiding them in the use of Biblical material. Any dogmatic, prejudicial statement that is not based on study and thoughtful, prayerful living should be avoided, since such an approach blocks continuous growth during adolescence and adult life.

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Tests

The various tests suitable to fourth, fifth, and sixth grades will give the boys and girls time to recall and organize knowledge and the teacher opportunity to check on the children's comprehension. These tests include completion tests such as the following:

"I was glad when they said unto me
Let us go — — — — —.
My feet are standing within thy — — — — —."
—Psalm 122. 1, 2.

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye — — — — —."

Best choice tests may be developed as this partial one on the Hebrew patriarchs: (Underline the best answer.)

Abraham was called	The leader of his tribe The friend of God The first Hebrew
Abraham left his home to come to Canaan in order to	Make money Learn to know and worship God Escape a warlike tribe
Jacob left his home	To worship God To escape Esau's anger because of his trickery To visit his uncle

True-false tests and recognition tests may also be used. They appeal to the juniors' love of games and fun.

Bible Drill

We shall presuppose that the church has given a copy of the Bible to each pupil as he enters the fourth grade. One of the opportunities and problems of the teacher is to help the class to use these Bibles intelligently. The simple unit that will introduce the child to the Bible in late third grade should be continued with different emphasis in the

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fourth grade. The child should have a chance to master the mechanics of the Bible. He should learn how to use the index of the Bible until he memorizes it without realizing that he is doing so. This is a better way than trying a direct memorization of the books of the Bible. Many times the direct method makes it necessary for the child to repeat the names of all the books until he comes to the one he wishes to use. Constant use will mean a better understanding of the location of the books of the Bible than any artificial drill, making little libraries, making rainbow book-marks, and so on.

Children should have some understanding of the divisions of the Bible; that is, what kind of materials are to be found in certain books or groups of books. They should know, for instance, that the book of Job is a drama, that the Psalms is a book of devotional literature, that the Gospels are our written records of Jesus' life and ministry.

In connection with his study of the story of the Bible, the junior should know that Bible verses and chapters are artificial divisions that did not appear until late in the development of the translation of the Bible, and that while helpful at times, the Bible cannot always be read intelligently by chapter and verse. Mechanical, unrelated Bible drills will not be used. No Bible drills will be used with the entire junior department as they are new to the first-year children and the drill is often an unpleasant experience for them. Drill work should be done in small class or interest groups.

Interest in New Discoveries

Junior boys and girls are interested in expeditions and new discoveries. They enjoy contrasting what is going on in Bible lands today with the past. The teacher can have a bulletin board to encourage the class to look for accounts of new finds that shed light on the Bible, and to bring the clippings for the bulletin board. In this connection the

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story of some of the important archaeological discoveries may be studied.

Universal Revelation of God

As boys and girls develop they should not only have an opportunity to study the Old Testament and to know something of religious customs of the Jews, but there should be a simple introduction to comparative religions. For the young child this is a confusing approach, since he has no historical sense. Our unique task is to share our heritage as Christians with him, and he should be as well grounded as a child can be in the point of view of the New Testament before he seriously approaches any use of the Old Testament. After an introduction to the Old Testament, the next step is to help the pupil to see that God has not denied himself to any people who have sought him; that while the revelation may be broken and incomplete, the universal Father has been known by all his children. This does not negate the unique message of Jesus nor the imperative to share the gospel. Such a comparative approach may well begin in the sixth grade and continue through adolescence. In the judgment of the writer, it strengthens the message of the Christian religion to see that it is a capstone to the world's religions.

Wise Use of the Bible

There is one danger that must be avoided with junior children. Because they are so able to learn and because they have such keen intellectual curiosity, adults sometimes overdo the use of the Bible in this period. The Bible is valuable when it contributes to the growth of personality. Just as Jesus used the Old Testament constantly to help men find God and think of themselves as children of God and believe in the love and care of God, so teachers today will use the Bible with older children, not for itself, but to foster growing religious life. They will seek to have youth enter adolescence with keen hunger for continued Bible study.

CHAPTER X

WHAT LIES BEYOND?

The Reason for This Chapter

Some children's teachers may wonder why a book on the use of the Bible with children includes a chapter on adolescent and adult studies of the Bible. The sixth grade does not complete the child's opportunities for religious growth. It is necessary for the child's parent and teacher to see the entire picture in order to realize that the climax of work with children lies beyond childhood and so to resist the temptation to endeavor to reap results in organized knowledge too rapidly and too soon for the child's best good. Religious teachers of children have to be unselfish, sowing and trusting the reaping to others, if they are to nurture child life well.

The total picture of church-school experience reveals the organizing process in religious learning that comes properly in adolescence and in young adult life. For the tale is not told when the child leaves the sixth grade. At least six years of school life lie ahead of the boys and girls who go out of our Junior Departments each Promotion Day. In their public-school education these years may mark the rounding out of general knowledge and background.

Adolescence has arrived with its quickening of the emotional life, its deepening of insight. The long stretch toward emotional maturity continues. A time sense and an historical sense are rapidly developing. Boys and girls in adolescence can place the capstone on all that has been taught them while they were in the elementary grades.

How will the Church provide for the adolescent period? Probably there is no more neglected age than the junior high in the entire religious education setup. Just as pupils reach the age when they can organize their knowledge of

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the Bible, their understanding of its teachings, and their dynamic use of it in connection with experience, the work seems to "peter" out. Bishop Vincent used an apt illustration of the work of the Church with adolescents when he described it as like a wagon full of apples with the tailgate missing.

Intensive Bible Study

During the adolescent period serious Bible study should be planned. The pupils may understand and propose themselves that it be intensive. They should determine on what this study will include, and continue to have an opportunity to practice methods of Bible study that were begun in the third through the sixth grades.

The fact that so many pupils attend our church schools through childhood and adolescence and seemingly know nothing about the Bible when they complete the experience is contributed to by a failure to provide intensive Bible study during adolescence. Nor can this be avoided by introducing younger boys and girls to the kinds of materials and methods suitable only after the seventh grade is reached.

The pupil, at eighteen years of age, should have a thorough grounding, not only in Biblical backgrounds, not only a knowledge of how the Bible functions in life today, but he should be Biblically literate; that is, he should have a knowledge of what is in the Bible itself, where to find it, and a good general knowledge of its meaning.

The Pastor and the Adolescent's Study

The pastor can do more than any other person to secure for adolescents such a serious study of the Bible by placing an emphasis upon this need and by helping the teachers of adolescents to prepare themselves to lead older groups. In cases where it is impossible to secure teachers as guides, the pastor himself, who takes a dynamic attitude toward the Bible and its teachings, can in six months given to the New Testament and six months to the Old Testament in the

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late high-school period help the boys and girls to a mastery of the Bible that will round out everything the church school has given them in knowledge up to this time. It is more important that he train his parishioners to carry on this work, however.

This should be a most glorious challenge to any pastor. If the pastor is to render such a service to adolescents, he must take time to study methods of guiding discussion, investigation, research, and report by adolescents. If he is going merely to preach or to lecture, he will not hold or help his group, for he is teaching no method of attack to use in carrying on future Bible study. Careful and intensive attention given to the high school and young people's groups in a local church would in a decade help to change the quality of interest in and knowledge of the Bible among the congregation to a large degree.

Young People and Adults

There should be a definite break in the type of class organization and of study at the end of the high-school experience. Young people and adults will continue Bible study, of course. But by the time the pupil graduates from high school his fundamental training should be complete, and a new type of study, perhaps in the form of electives, should be planned. There is no more tragic admission of ignorance of the Bible on the part of some adults than the desire to study a lesson that can be even approximately adapted to children. Every church should have classes for young people and adults that keep them constantly searching the Scriptures for devotional value, for guidance for life, and in certain churches, for research and study. Other classes would help adults to discover teaching values in the Bible. In some churches one class would be designed to keep adults and young people up to date regarding new findings of archaeologists and Bible scholars in Palestine and Egypt.

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Can the Bible Become Influential?

Society is in a period of transition. If the Bible is to be used to help men to grow in stalwart Christian character, if they are to regard it as the word of God and reverently to seek and to find his will as it is revealed through the pages of the Book, persons today must learn to use the Bible beginning as little children and increasingly as they develop in abilities and insights, in ways that are in keeping with their point of approach and attack upon all other problems of life. Only thus can the Bible come into its rightful own. Only thus can God speak to modern man through its pages, and the supreme need of modern man is a living Bible.

Persons cannot approach the Bible through habit with methods that are outworn and meaningless so far as they are concerned and hope to be benefited by their study. Especially is this true if they do not use these same methods in any other areas of interest or endeavor. There are signs, and hopeful ones, that adults are hungry to find help in the field of Bible study. The large sale of a recently published Bible designed for reading is one indication of this desire. The large sale of books that throw light upon Biblical material is another indication. If adults can find, in the solving of their own difficult religious problems, that the religious heritage of the Bible flows into life as a resource for giving strength and stimulation and enrichment, the Bible will no longer be a closed book. There will be adults who not only reverence the Bible in a vague and general sort of way, but the church fellowship will understand the Bible and will know how to share its heritage with children.

When Jesus was teaching the multitudes in Galilee, he proclaimed that his purpose was not to break with the religious heritage of the past, but to fill it full of meaning for life. This book has reverently tried to follow the example of the Master in developing this discussion of the use of the Bible for the religious nurture of children.

WHAT LIES BEYOND?

For Further Study

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Youth and the Bible, Streibert, Muriel Anne. The Macmillan Company.

Modern Use of the Bible, Fosdick, Harry Emerson. The Macmillan Company.

Concerning the Bible, Skinner, C. A. The Abingdon Press.

Jesus and Our Pressing Problems, Walker, Rollin H. The Abingdon Press.

The Teachings of Jesus, Rall, Harris F. The Abingdon Press.

Jesus Christ Before His Ministry, Stapfer, Edmond Louis.
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